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### The WDR Big Band: A Brief History

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# THE WDR BIG BAND: A BRIEF HISTORY

by

Gabriela A. Richmond

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Music

Major: Music

Under the Supervision of Professor Pamela F. Starr

Lincoln, Nebraska

April, 2011

# THE WDR BIG BAND: A BRIEF HISTORY

Gabriela A. Richmond, M.M.

University of Nebraska, 2011

Advisor: Pamela F. Starr

The years following World War II brought new broadcasting stations to a divided Germany, government regulated radio stations in the East and state regulated stations in the West. Radio broadcasts were a significant cultural source for the Germans in times of reconstruction. Broadcasting stations played much of the familiar *Tanz- und Unterhaltungsmusik*, reminiscent of earlier times of happiness and prosperity. However, with changes in a new generation's musical tastes the demand for swing bands declined. Radio stations began to rework their in-house "dance bands" into "jazz bands." The *West Deutscher Rundfunk* (WDR), and other broadcast stations, employed jazz musicians full-time.

This thesis investigates the development of the WDR Big Band as follows: Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the state of jazz and swing music at the end of World War II in Germany. Chapter 2 examines the decline in popularity of swing bands after World War II in Germany and its causes. It examines the transitional years from "dance bands" into "big bands" by studying the *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk* (NWDR) dance band in Cologne. These changes lay the path for the change to "big bands" during the 1960's. The final chapter presents an analysis of the stylistic changes that the KTUO band made to transform into a big band during the 1960's. It will touch on the

collaboration between the KTUO band and the WDR broadcasting station and will then examine the early years of the new WDR Big Band. I will consider personnel choices and stylistic practices of the WDR Big Band. Further, I will study the later years of the WDR Big Band to the present, including changes in direction and collaborations with American artists. Finally, the third chapter also provides conclusions of this investigation and implications for future research.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe deep gratitude to a number of people. It is thanks to their guidance, friendship, and helpfulness that this project is finished.

Many thanks to Dr. Pamela Starr, whose invaluable editing and production assistance helped me tremendously. Her commitment to and interest in the material, sensitivity towards detail, and carefulness in reading the many drafts are a gift that I fortunately received throughout my graduate career. It is her persistence towards “keeping the deadline as agreed” that helped me stay focused on the end product. Further, I owe deep gratitude to my other committee members, Drs. Anthony Bushard and Robert Woody, for lending ears and helping refine this project during the stages of source collection and rough drafting.

In addition, I am thankful for the courtesies personally extended by Westdeutscher Rundfunk intern Nikolas Schriefer and the librarians at the Jazzinstitut Darmstadt for providing me both sources and guidance to further my research.

I am grateful to my father, Günter Praetzel, for the inspiration, opportunities, and support he has given me now and throughout my life. I feel a deep sense of gratitude towards the many hours he spent fostering my interest in music, and especially jazz. Also, thanks to my father for the additional scholarly resources he sent to me from Germany.

Thanks to my husband Jeffrey, this product is finished in time for my anticipated graduation. Without his encouragement and persistence on finishing this work, I would not have done it.

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## THE EARLY YEARS: DANCE BANDS DURING WORLD WAR II

September 2nd, 1945 – World War II comes to a close as Germany lies in rubble after the collapse of the Nazi government. The Japanese have surrendered, and sixty million casualties have torn the fabric of the global society into shreds. German citizens feel defeated, depressed, and devoid of national cultural identity. This defeat of self and the ruthless censorship of creative expression had created a marked cultural void in Germany.

During Hitler's regime, jazz music did not conform to the ideals of the Aryan race and was consequently barred from record shops and radio stations.<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that German jazz enthusiasts vanished along with the music, but that the political climate forced them to put non-German cultural interests on hold. As a result, Germany lagged behind in all the arts and did not catch up until the 1960's.

As Western German society emerged with the promulgation of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) on May 23, 1949, as a free democratic entity, this new freedom prompted a subtle move toward filling the all-too-obvious cultural void.<sup>2</sup> Larger cities such as Frankfurt, Munich, and Berlin were the first to be reconstructed after the war. As this reconstruction took place, Berlin quickly emerged as the fastest city to revive the arts and culture, in large part due to the around-

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 64.

<sup>2</sup> Museum König, "Geschichte des Museum König," <http://www.zfmk.de/web/Ueberuns/Geschichte/index.en.html> (accessed January 16, 2011).



the-clock reconstruction efforts of the city's citizens and the Soviet occupying forces. Newspapers, magazines, concerts, cabaret, and opera soon were offered and were well received by the public.<sup>3</sup> German citizens warmly welcomed back the variety of cultural choices. Berlin had been the European metropolis for fine and performing arts during the 1920's, and early 1930's, especially for jazz, with Paris as the other closely competing city.<sup>4</sup> This reinvigoration of the arts scene in Berlin was directly correlated with a emergence of jazz music and jazz culture.

At the end of World War II, German dance orchestras quickly re-gained popularity which they had enjoyed during the 1920's.<sup>5</sup> The parallels to American jazz, and its associations with race, sex, and rowdiness had been frowned upon by the Nazi regime, and did not fit the national socialist ideology. During the heights of the Nazi party oppression, marching and Hitler folk music was abundant and continuously broadcasted, to the extent that resistance to these cultural impositions eventually reached the Nazi command. High-ranking Nazi officials achieved to get dance music back for public functions such as banquets, award ceremonies and galas. Therefore, highly restricted and purely Aryan dance orchestras began to perform again before the conclusion of the war, under strict supervision of the government. Further, the national socialist party began to broadcast dance music at the end of the war in belief that upbeat tunes and a mere change from folk and marching music would lift the severely weakened national spirit. By playing *Tanz- und Unterhaltungsmusik*, Nazis were hoping to give a

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<sup>3</sup> Viola Edelhagen, *Die Big Band Story: Die Big-Bands nach 1945 in der BRD* (Frankfurt: Buchhandlung und Antiquariat H.A. Eisenbletter & B.S.M. Naumann, 1988), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 20.

false sense of victorious spirit and all the more reason to dance and celebrate.<sup>6</sup> Although jazz music was censored for public consumption– and in fact criticized by public media beginning in 1927<sup>7</sup>– by the Nazi Regime because of its American and multi-racial association,<sup>8</sup> followers of the Nazi party still enjoyed dancing to polite society music.<sup>9</sup>

Many German dance orchestras developed during the mid 1920's, during a time of economic upswing post World War I.<sup>10</sup> It was then that dance music was wildly popular and German *Tanz- und Unterhaltungsortchester* flourished. When Hitler got elected into office, the dance band culture was diminished, muted, and eventually re-invigorated by officials of the national socialist party in the early 1940's. This development in Germany differed with the state of popular music in the United States. At

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 153. For a detailed analysis of the differences between German dance music and classic American jazz, please see Edelhagen 24-27.

<sup>7</sup> As jazz musicians of the 1920's secretly continued to play jazz, German newspapers began to harass the jazz music scene. *Querschnitt*, *Uhu-Magazin*, and *Magazin* wrote about jazz music, and showed pictures of the Whiteman band, Vincent Lopez as well as Josephine Baker, and Sam Wooding, and drew caricatures of “wild jazz” events; Horst Lange, *Jazz in Deutschland* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1966), 47.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis Erenberg, *Swinin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 213.

<sup>9</sup> Polite Society music was known as elegant dance music of white, wealthy audiences, and was played by bands between 1925-1935. It is characterized by very structured arrangements to aid dancers locate the form of a piece, timbral and dynamic choices that are slower and quieter than later swing music, larger ensemble instrumentation compared to the 1920's jazz combo instrumentation to ease amplification in dance halls, and improvisation being secondary to the composition. German polite society music in this regard was similar to the sounds of American polite society bands, such as the ones led by Paul Whiteman, Fletcher Henderson, or pre-Armstrong/Hawkins. This music was not associated by white audiences with the ‘crass, primitively, erotic’ music of African Americans at the time. For Further reading see chapter 5, “Swing and Its Discontents,” in David W. Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America*, (Harvard University Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> See Erenberg, 217; Kater, 5.

the end of the 1930's, swing bands in the US greatly dwindled in numbers, to the point of extinction in the early 1940's at last.<sup>11</sup> Erenberg links several occurrences in economy and unrealistic salaries and touring benefits by swing musicians to this phenomenon. The United States began to impose a 20% amusement tax to discourage citizens from attending dance halls and nightclubs.<sup>12</sup> To fund the ongoing war, the US government hiked other taxes and food prices, resulting in higher living expenses for American citizens. Consequently, few could afford to go out. Swing musicians declined the request by dance hall owners to reduce their fees, and thus were not hired to play. After World War II, swing was not able to undergo a comeback because of a change in audience. Children of the swing generation now were the target audience for broadcasting and social media, and swing to them felt like listening to their parents' music. As *Variety* magazine points out, "They, too, are going through a reconversion period. The findings of jobs and attention to numerous other details of returning to civvies now occupies all their attention."<sup>13</sup> The bands with the most business at the time were bands playing polite society music because of their mellow, slow, and amorous sounds.<sup>14</sup> Erenberg notes that "audiences wanted quiet, soothing sounds."<sup>15</sup>

The characteristics of German dance orchestras largely resembled those of American polite society orchestras: instrumentations with and without strings, gentle,

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<sup>11</sup> Stowe, 181. David Stowe supports that the swing era lasted from 1932-1944.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 190.

<sup>13</sup> Erenberg, 214-215.

<sup>14</sup> Tommy Dorsey notes in one of his interviews that many swing bands felt pressured. Sweet music needed to be danceable and simpler than swing band arrangements. If that was not the case, guests would ask for the bill and leave. Stowe, 190.

<sup>15</sup> Erenberg, 217.

rhythmic syncopations, regular musical forms, and a performance style with one musician as the bandleader and emcee for the evening. Furthermore, Germans danced the same types of dances to this music, such as the “Cakewalk, One-Step, Boston, Tango, Pasodoble, and later also the Charleston.”<sup>16</sup> Fans and musicians of dance and swing music eventually sought out American GI’s to learn more about jazz, the music Germans linked to “American democracy and prosperity.”<sup>17</sup>

Most dance orchestras either regularly performed in Berlin or passed through the city because of popular demand and available funding.<sup>18</sup> Among the most popular orchestras at the end of the war were the *DTU (Deutsches Tanz- und Unterhaltungsorchester)*, the *RBT-O (Radio Berlin Tanzorchester)*, the *Kurt Wittmann Orchestra*, and Tanzorchester of Lubo D’Orio, Ebert Bauschke, Kurt Hohenberger, and Max Rumpf.<sup>19</sup> The German museum of broadcasting notes that the *DTU* was the most noted dance orchestra of the time. The predecessor of the *DTU* had been established by the Nazi party, for the reasons cited above.<sup>20</sup>

The Nazi party did not have to look hard to find musicians that would perform dance music. Musicians of the 1920’s and 1930’s were still located in Berlin, awaiting to

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<sup>16</sup> Lange, 13,29.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 244.

<sup>18</sup> Joachim Ernst Behrendt, *Ein Fenster aus Jazz* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), 165; Edelhagen, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Edelhagen, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Rundfunkmuseum, “Deutsches Tanz- und Unterhaltungsorchester,” [http://www.rundfunkmuseum.at/html/deutsches\\_tanz\\_und\\_unterhaltun.html](http://www.rundfunkmuseum.at/html/deutsches_tanz_und_unterhaltun.html) (accessed November 5, 2010).

be able to profess their passions for dance and, now also publicly, swing music.<sup>21</sup> Uta Poiger even notes that “musicians were literally creeping out of their bomb shelters, playing on top of the rubble in Berlin.”<sup>22</sup> After the war, this accumulation of musicians furthered a quick re-development of the jazz scene in Berlin, although it would never return to its “golden age” heights of the 1920’s. Conditions favored Berlin’s return to its blossoming musical environment of the late 1920’s and 1930’s, a musical cultural shift was generated after World War II.<sup>23</sup>

In 1945, Berlin was still occupied by the Allies. Under the terms of the occupation, individual zones were drawn up and divided among the allied powers, with each government regulating, among other things, the broadcasting stations in their respective territories. For West Berlin this meant that the United Kingdom, France, and the United States set up public broadcasting stations, while East Berlin received broadcasts from the Soviets. The Soviet government began to develop one radio broadcasting station in 1945, run by one government entity called the *Deutsche Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung*.<sup>24</sup> This, naturally, sparked interest because it was new and different from the marching music and glorified folk songs to which they had

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<sup>21</sup> Uta Poiger, “Taming the Wild West: American Popular Culture and the Cold War Battles over East and West German Identities, 1949-1961” (PhD diss., Brown University, 1995), 30, 32; Edelhagen, 12; and Wolfgang Knauer, *Jazz in Deutschland— Darmstädter Beiträge zur Jazzforschung* (Hofheim, 1996), 10, point out that German musicians and jazz audiences were excited to profess their passion for jazz publicly.

<sup>22</sup> Poiger, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Horst Lange, *Jazz in Deutschland: Die Deutsche Jazz Chronik 1900-1960*. Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1966, 120.

<sup>24</sup> Rudolf Frisius, “Rundfunk und Fernsehen,” In *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, edited by Ludwig Finscher (Kassel, Germany: Bärenreiter, 1994), 611-612.

been exposed before and during the war. But the Soviet ally had its own agenda, which would eventually turn radio into yet another medium spreading socialism. By not playing what Germans wanted to hear, but what Soviets wanted Germans to hear, this broadcasting system did not further the development of German musical culture, but rather the spread of a socialist doctrine. In the Western sector, however, this system was not employed. Here, in 1948, broadcasting stations were quickly handed over to each federal state institution after the United Kingdom, the United States, and France ceded control as part of their efforts to establish the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>25</sup> This difference in Soviet government versus federal state broadcasting would become important to the fate and future of dance and eventual jazz bands. All allied regulated broadcasting stations continued to transmit music that had been popular in their home country, and greatly differed from the music Germans had been exposed to during the Hitler regime.

The allied governments in charge of the Western zone waited a few years until laws were passed by all involved military response forces to have each individual federal state run its own broadcasting station. As a result, the *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk* (NWDR) became the designated radio broadcasting agency for the states North Rhine-Westphalia, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig Holstein between 1948/49. Other stations that were established during that time include the *Bayrischer Rundfunk* (BR) for the Munich area, the *Hessische Rundfunk* (HR) for Frankfurt, the *Süddeutscher Rundfunk* (SDR) for Stuttgart, *Radio Bremen* (RB) and the *Südwestrundfunk* (SWR) for the state of

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<sup>25</sup> Edelhagen, 15.

Baden-Baden.<sup>26</sup> These radio broadcasting stations were funded by federal state agencies and provided for an economically viable medium for home entertainment and education.

In fact, the German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), established in 1949, mandated that “cultural affairs should be the preservation of regional, and not federal, government (and that)... music should be supervised and sponsored at *Land* and municipal level.”<sup>27</sup>

Televisions at this point were not a widely available commodity; radios on the other hand were affordable and provided a variety of entertainment and education for the whole family: news, cultural programs, and music shows for all ages. The war had created a large backlog in German society. Citizens needed to make up for the years of censorship and were eager to catch up with the rest of the world. Programming was designed in such a way that child-appropriate shows were broadcasted during the earlier hours of the day, while shows for more mature listeners were broadcasted at night. Music shows that broadcasted jazz were included in the night programming, usually in the late evening.<sup>28</sup>

Jazz after the war found a substantial fan base, even though jazz musicians in West Germany remained unaccepted by the general public after 1945. Citizens in Eastern Germany on the other hand continued to publicly bully jazz and its fan base.<sup>29</sup> From 1945

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<sup>26</sup> Frisius, 611-634.

<sup>27</sup> Toby Thacker, *Music After Hitler, 1945-1955* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 120.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Wright Hurley, *The Return of Jazz: Joachim-Ernst Berendt and West German Cultural Change* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 16.

<sup>29</sup> Poiger, 171. For further reading on the hostility towards jazz in East Germany, see Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), and Lange, *Jazz in Deutschland*, 164. For Further reading on the hostility of Nazis towards jazz, see Michael Kater, “The Jazz Experience in Weimar Germany,” *German History* 6, (1988): 145-58, 154. “The Nazis did try to prohibit jazz and persecuted jazz fans. After 1945, when jazz experienced a renaissance in both

to the mid 1950's, radio broadcasting stations occupying Western Germany aired popular jazz bands— many bands that had performed prior to Hitler's regime— and played polite society music rather than the unfamiliar and then modern jazz style called bebop.

Familiar music attracted audiences that had enjoyed jazz during the 1920's as well as swing band audiences of the 1930's and was hoped to attract more listeners to late-night shows. German musicians picked up the musical landscape where they had left off, but soon realized that jazz had evolved, and that swing music and polite society music had gotten out of style.

Consequently, the German jazz scene underwent its own reconstruction phase in the mid 1950's. German jazz musicians had fallen behind the trends of American jazz as a result of the war. They were, quite simply, less accomplished than their American counterparts. As a *NDR Big Band* member notes in Edelhagen's book, "While all my colleagues abroad were playing as amateurs in dixie- and swing bands, I had to sing Hitlerjugend songs."<sup>30</sup> It became obvious to German musicians that they were behind the current trends in jazz. Musicians learned about the changes in musical style, performance style, and changes of "standard" instrumentation through movies and releases of jazz recordings from the United States. German jazz musicians found opportunities to perform with touring American bands. For example, tenor saxophonist and bandleader Max Greger had opportunities to perform with Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Ella

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Germanies, opponents again took up the interlinked notions of sexual transgression and racial decay." 172.

<sup>30</sup> Edelhagen, 12.



Fitzgerald while in Munich.<sup>31</sup> Uta Poiger notes that “In 1945 and 1946 jazz fans who had not given up their enthusiasm for the music during the Nazi years founded so-called ‘Hot Clubs’ in several East and West German cities, including Leipzig, Berlin, and Frankfurt.”<sup>32</sup> These jazz clubs became very popular with jazz aficionados and were highly criticized by their opponents for encouraging a place of sexual and “non-German” improprieties. The exposure to touring American jazz artists and the establishment of “Hot Clubs” provided Germans the first glimpse of the new jazz avant-garde, bebop. German jazz artists, however, did not become well versed in the bebop idiom until the early 1950s.

The process of trying to catch up with contemporary jazz trends from the United States took several years. As recordings provide evidence, German big bands after World War II still recorded hits of the 1920’s and 1930’s.<sup>33</sup> Jazz artists that had been performing prior to the war’s outbreak spread across Germany to re-activate their careers and were mostly musicians located in Berlin, or who frequently performed there. They formed their own groups and played at British and American casinos, bars, and clubs– these venues served as catapults for solo and ensemble careers of German jazz musicians. The careers of Freddie Brocksieper, Kurt Hohenberger, Kurt Wittmann, and Lubo D’Orio provide examples of such solo careers.<sup>34</sup>

Young bandleaders were also among the jazz musicians that entered the German music scene. This younger generation of bandleaders, however, did not originate in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Poiger, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Edelhagen, 14; Lange, 190.

<sup>34</sup> Lange, 120-130.

Berlin; instead, they began their solo careers in other large cities and began travelling with their newly established ensembles around the time of reconstruction. Kurt Edelhagen, the man who would lead the WDR Big Band during the 1950's, Max Greger, and Franz Thon, the leader of the *NWDR Tanzorchester* in Hamburg, represent musicians of this group.<sup>35</sup> It was the excitement of the older generation of jazz musicians and the curiosity of the younger bandleaders that delayed the extinction of German dance bands until the 1950's.

Opinion on the influence of American swing bands on German dance bands differs depending on the scholarly source. Edelhagen in her book claims that German dance bands had not been influenced by American dance bands prior to the end of World War II— a position that is not shared by the musicologist Horst Lange. Edelhagen further argues that jazz was not as preeminent in Germany before World War II as it was after.

Musicologist Horst Lange on the other hand describes six periods of jazz developments before the end of World War II. In his book *Jazz in Deutschland* he argues that Germany's *Golden Jazz Age* paralleled the American one. He further argues that the revival of swing and jazz after World War II was not as significant to the German jazz scene as the period between 1920-1931.<sup>36</sup> He disputes that American touring jazz bands influenced the German jazz scene during the 1920's. Both of their research seem factually correct, but the authors differ on their definition of jazz.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 7. Lange divides the six periods of German jazz into the following: 1900-1920 as the Ragtime age, 1920-1931 as *The Golden Age of Jazz* in Germany, 1932-1940 as the age of jazz oppression and jazz prohibition, 1940-1943 as the *Jazz and Swing Revival* age at the end of World War II, 1945-1950 as a transitory period for jazz, and 1950-present as the period of *modernism* in German jazz.

The syncopated style of American ragtime orchestras had been favored and adopted by German dance orchestras, but because of the scarcity of jazz recordings at the time, German jazz musicians were not fully aware of the ragtime scene in the United States. Further, the outbreak of the war in 1914 ended the possibility of learning more about ragtime. The challenges for ragtime musicians after World War I were multi-fold as well. The German government prohibited most imports from foreign countries until 1920, which hindered musicians' ability to become more familiar with ragtime music and early jazz. Further, Germans had established an anti-foreign frame of mind that only supported German "conservatism," "hyper patriotism," and "true German values."<sup>37</sup> Communities interested in arts and culture slowly revived the interest for dance and dance music in the early 1920's. Because of the unavailability of most ragtime recordings, musicians reemerged after World War II playing in the style they left behind before 1914.<sup>38</sup> The point Lange makes about the influence of American jazz bands on German *Tanzorchester* is that American polite society bands greatly influenced the development of jazz in Germany. He notes that it was in fact "...Whiteman's sound that German bands wanted to imitate. Bands that had previously visited Germany such as the *Ohio Lido Venice Band* and the *Sam Wooding Orchestra*, were too "hot" and "untamed" for the German audience at the time." Germans loved *Symphonic Jazz*, which would become the sound of German *Tanzorchester* of the 1930's.<sup>39</sup> Jazz bands during the

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Lange, 13; Markus Lütticke, *Jazz in Deutschland: Blütezeit und Tiefpunkte in der Zeit von 1919-1945* (Germany: Grin Verlag für akademische Texte, 2008), 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Symphonic Jazz* is a term connected by Paul Whiteman and his orchestra in the 1920's to connect classical forms with jazz idioms. For further reading see Oxford Music Online,

1920's such as the *Tanzkapelle Stefan Weintraub* (later *Weintraubs Syncopators*),<sup>40</sup> The *Symphonic Jazz Band* of Fred Birch (also known as Felix Lehmann),<sup>41</sup> Ben Berlin's *Berlin Orchester*, or John Muzzi's *Heliopis Band* illustrate this.<sup>42</sup> German *Tanz- und Unterhaltungsorchester* repertoire largely remained the same until its total discontinuation during the Nazi era. Bands continued to perform what they played before World War I: ragtime pieces, as well as dances typical of the time period; "Cakewalk, One-Step, Boston, Tango, Pasodoble... and later Charleston."<sup>43</sup> Jazz, however, did continue to develop during the 1920's in Germany through the establishment of many jazz combos and performing amateur jazz musicians who were trying to imitate the style of classic jazz with their own groups. The *Tanz- und Unterhaltungsorchester* scene on the other hand remained static in its style and mission— hence the continued use of the names *Tanzorchester* and *Unterhaltungsorchester*— until the end of World War II.

The influence of American swing bands on German *Tanzorchester* after the war was immense. Swing bands were very popular and in demand. After World War II, Germans enjoyed listening to imported jazz from America and Great Britain. Germans found jazz uplifting after the war years had passed, and were saturated with non-German

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"*Symphonic Jazz*," Oxford University Press [http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.unl.edu:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/27249?q=symphonic+jazz&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.unl.edu:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/27249?q=symphonic+jazz&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) (accessed January 17, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Lange, 49.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 30, 50. The Paul Whiteman Band debuted on June 25, 1926 at the Berliner *Grosses Schauspielhaus*.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 13, 29.

music by American and British forces networks.<sup>44</sup> The popularity of jazz and big bands was the catalyst for the development of a radio big band culture beginning in the 1950's.

The gradual development of radio broadcasting stations creating their own *Tanzorchester*— many which would soon after be named *Big Band*— began when radio broadcasting stations began to contract existing *Tanz- und Unterhaltungsortchester* or members of nationally acclaimed bands.<sup>45</sup> After the war, radio stations were the only organizations to be able to financially sponsor ensembles of this size. Musicians who were eager to continue to play in such ensembles flocked to cities where these stations were located. Radio broadcasting stations chose well-known musicians as their directors in hopes of drawing more celebrated musicians to work for the broadcasting station. Often, a bandleader would bring his entire orchestra— as was the case with the early *WDR Big Band* personnel, which will be discussed. Broadcasting stations with notable bandleaders included the Radio In the American Sector in Berlin (RIAS), with Werner Müller leading the *Tanzorchester des RIAS Berlin*; the Süddeutscher Rundfunk (SDR), with Erwin Lehn directing the *Tanzorchester des SDR*; the Hessischer Rundfunk with Willy Berking, the Südwestrundfunk with Carl Friedrich Homann (until 1952) and Kurt Edelhagen (1952- 57) directing the *Orchester des SWF*; the Bayerischer Rundfunk with Kurt Edelhagen leading the *Orchester BR*; Franz Thon directing the band at the Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk Hamburg (NWDR); Adalbert Luczkowski leading the band at the NWDR Cologne, and the Radio Berlin *Tanzorchester*, or *RBT- Orchester*, lead by

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<sup>44</sup> Poiger, 30; Lange, 119 and 151-152; Kater, 202-203.

<sup>45</sup> Reimund Hess and Herbert Hellhund, Record jacket for *Die SWF Big Band Story*, Südwestfunk Baden-Baden SWF 107-108, 1985.

Horst Kruditzkie and Erwin Lehn.<sup>46</sup> These bands, with the exception of the RIAS band and the dissolution of the NWDR broadcasting network, began with dance orchestras that, over time, developed into jazz bands.

As discussed earlier, the significance and emergence of jazz has been a point of contention among German musicologists. The fact that GI's brought classic and big band jazz to Germany at the end of World War II is widely unchallenged.<sup>47</sup> The infusion of jazz—especially swing bands—into West German culture quickly emerged during the late 1940's. In the United States, on the contrary, swing bands tapered off by the mid 1940's. “The economic and cultural weaknesses of the dance band industry and the splintering of a united front allowed critics to attack on moral and political grounds with a virulence and effectiveness hitherto impossible.”<sup>48</sup> While this was not the case with German bands, German jazz continued to undergo much criticism in both East and West Germany. American occupying forces were conflicted about American popular culture and were unsure how to convey their values to a broken German society.

Hostilities toward American culture persisted in both Germany and the United States after World War II. In this context, the American government tried to control what American cultural products entered postwar Germany. In the decade from 1945 to 1955, the American cultural center, so-called *Amerikahäuser*, which opened in major German cities with support from the American government, did little to spread American popular culture—be it popular movies or jazz—in Germany.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Edelhagen, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Poiger, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Erenberg, 242.

<sup>49</sup> Poiger, 29. See also Reiner Pommerin, *The American Impact on Postwar Germany* (Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 1997).

Because jazz in the United States was not widely accepted until the mid 1950's,<sup>50</sup> performances of jazz remained low. Jazz at this point did not have much appreciation and respect in America.<sup>51</sup>

Although live performance may not have been sponsored as extensively as German jazz fans desired, the import of American goods rose significantly after 1945. American recordings were available in both East and West Germany, facilitating the spread of jazz. The Germans bought records, gained access to Hollywood movies which used jazz, and listened to allied broadcasting networks that played jazz.<sup>52</sup> Germans were intrigued by American culture and linked jazz to American independence, democracy and wealth.<sup>53</sup> Jazz, with its hot rhythms and syncopations, was welcomed during the postwar era when Germans longed for fast-paced music.

It was during this time of strong desire for fast and hot music, seemingly uncontrolled energy and late-night parties filled with dance, cigars, and alcohol, that the polite society band and swing culture declined in Germany. During the late 1940's, jazz—both small combos as well as big bands—rose in popularity. Jazz musicians from the United States began to travel to Germany. The first jazz musician to play in front of a

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<sup>50</sup> On hostility towards jazz in America, see Lawrence Levine, "Jazz and American Culture," *Journal of American Folklore* 102 (January-March 1989), and Neil Leonard, *Jazz and the White Americans: The Acceptance of a New Art Form* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>51</sup> Levine, 6-22.

<sup>52</sup> Poiger 5, 30. On swing youth culture and the importance of American movies and music in the last years of the Weimar republic and thereafter, see also Michael Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany*, "Amerikanismus im Dritten Reich," in *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, ed. Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 199-215.

<sup>53</sup> Poiger, 3.

large, very enthusiastic crowd in Berlin was Rex Stewart in 1948.<sup>54</sup> In Germany, jazz artists were treated like stars, contrary to the treatment of jazz artists at home. They were greeted by hordes of jazz fans at airports and train stations, and while few in the United States wanted to hear jazz bands at the end of the 1940's, Germans welcomed them with enthusiasm. In fact, as late as 1946 the "East German state youth organization Free German Youth (FDJ)... included dancing to the music of Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman as well as the American Boogie Woogie."<sup>55</sup> While this account suggests a move towards the acceptance of jazz into German culture, newspaper coverage of the 1940's German jazz scene records the opposite: that jazz music was still not widely accepted. In the monthly *Aufbau*, critic Paul Höfer defends jazz and notes that "Even today, in 1946, there still exist in our society those who, still believing firmly in German superiority, dismiss jazz as *Negermusik*."<sup>56</sup> The West German magazine *Hörzu* received many letters complaining about a jazz performance by the *Kurt Wege Orchestra* in 1947.<sup>57</sup> These complaints challenged jazz enthusiasts to collect an even larger amount of petitions supporting the musical decisions Wege and his orchestra had made.<sup>58</sup> Another article published shortly after in *Hörzu* by Josef Marein entitled "Tanzmusik so oder so? Jazz– eine Kulturschande?" ("Dance music either way? Jazz– a shame for culture?")

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<sup>54</sup> Lange, 153.

<sup>55</sup> Ruebe, Kurt-Gerhard. "Wir wollten einfach FREUNDE sein... Episodenhaftes zur Geschichte junger Leute im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Friedrichshain Herbst 1948 bis Frühjahr 1950," manuscript, without year; p.58-60 in Poiger, 33.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Höfer, *Aufbau* (May 1946) quoted in Poiger, 34.

<sup>57</sup> For the specifics of the reader complaints see *Hörzu*, no.44 (1947), and "Die Jazzsendungen im Hörfunk der Federal Republic" in Fark, *Die Missachtete Botschaft* (Berlin: Spiess, 1971), 168.

<sup>58</sup> Poiger, 34.



elaborated further on the continued discussion of whether jazz was appropriate and culturally acceptable or not.<sup>59</sup>

To sum up, jazz music— including its German derivatives— was popular in Germany before the outbreak of World War II. Germans, however, had an existing dance band culture; an environment that was filled with its own musical traditions. Although jazz was enjoyed by many musicians of the time, classically American jazz idioms did not work their way into German dance music until the 1940's. It was then that swing bands boomed in Germany while in America they began to decline. Jazz in Germany did not spread as quickly as it did in other European cities like Paris or London. This was mainly a result World War II and the political regime. After the war, it took several years for foreign goods, especially American movies and recordings, to be imported into Germany. As a result of this import delay, the musical gap between German jazz musicians and non-German jazz musicians grew significantly. This lack of proficiency in jazz style put German jazz musicians vastly behind their American colleagues, which resulted in a catch-up race between German jazz musicians and other jazz musicians abroad.

Dance band musicians became jazz artists after World War II. They had been the audience and connoisseurs for jazz music from its onset in Germany, but could not keep

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<sup>59</sup> Josef Marein, "Tanzmusik so oder so? Jazz— eine Kulturschande?" *Hörzu*, no. 44 (1947). For more discussions of jazz criticism in the public media between 1945-1950, see also Uta G. Poiger's book, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

up with the style changes jazz underwent in America during the 1930's and 1940's. War and censorship by the Nazi regime put jazz "on hold".

Tours of American jazz artists after World War II in Germany served as a catalyst for the increase in the popularity of jazz. Further, radio stations began to establish their own dance bands, and later jazz bands. Financial stability as well as ample employment opportunities drew the best dance band musicians to metropolitan areas with large broadcasting stations. Radio stations gave rise to swing and dance bands. This nurtured a dance band environment in Germany, which would prevail over the American swing band scene by a decade. German musicians were several years behind the rest of the world; this resulted in the popularity of swing and dance bands into the late 1940's and early 1950's. Jazz as an acceptable and recognized art form remained controversial in both East and West Germany. As Uta Poiger states in her book *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and Culture in a Divided Germany*, "like their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere, German opponents of jazz frequently positioned jazz outside the realm of culture; for them everything that "culture" was supposed to be jazz was not."<sup>60</sup> These issues faded in the 1950's: jazz – all of its various styles – would find a fan base and cultural acceptance in Germany to the present day.

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<sup>60</sup> Poiger, 137.

## AFTER THE WAR: KTUO AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WDR BAND

Chapter 2 will examine the decline in popularity of the swing bands in popularity after World War II in Germany as a result of the emergence of Rock and Roll. Because of this shift in popular music, German dance bands became more progressive in image and sound. I will examine the transitional years of dance bands as they slowly changed into formations of standard big bands, through the lens of one particular band, the dance band of the NWDR in Cologne. I will use the term “dance band” intentionally in this chapter because the NWDR- Cologne band remained an entertainment band similar in instrumentation and purpose to the dance bands that were present in pre-World War II Germany. An intriguing example of such change, the NWDR dance band, briefly also known as the *Kölner Tanz und Unterhaltungs Orchester* (KTUO), was a result of changes in popular music and media, and underwent its first image change after swing band performances declined in demand during the late 1940’s and into the 1950’s. The changes I will outline in this chapter are the first critical steps towards the proliferation of this dance band and will lay the path for the second significant change, the transformation into a true jazz band during the 1960’s.

“Jazz IS alive!” This expression was quite prevalent in the post World War II era amongst jazz aficionados, performers, promoters, and scholars. The phrase was a reaction to the natural decline jazz had seen throughout the world during the war. In the years following the war, many factors led to an eventual decline in swing bands in Germany.

The German youth eventually identified more closely with the emerging sounds of Rock n' Roll. The slogan "Jazz IS Alive!" reflected a move away from the swing and dance sounds popular before the war, toward a new sound influenced by the saturation of new recordings from the Allied forces broadcasts, and influences on the ground, such as hot clubs in metropolitan areas, and jazz performances in German pubs and bars by American soldiers and jazz musicians. German radio networks also greatly contributed to the preservation of German jazz and jazz bands.

The effects of World War II on German culture and society were enormous and diverse. *Apropos* of music during this time, Toby Thacker states in his book, *Music After Hitler*, that "...for a shocked and overwhelmed German population, music offered a locus of refuge, a space for contemplation and consolation."<sup>61</sup> Given the conditions of both the war and its aftermath, Germans had been deprived of significant cultural enrichment for some time. The sheer number of amateur musicians who had not been able to perform or even practice together created a potential energy for the re-emergent German musical scene, which was poised to influence a new musical generation.<sup>62</sup> External influences played a considerable role in shaping German musical developments in the post-war era. The Allies each had specific cultural traditions that were important to the emergent German cultural identity. Thacker mentions,

Bach and Beethoven above all seemed important at this time, a lifeline to another Germany and to eternal values. It became

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<sup>61</sup> Toby Thacker, *Music After Hitler, 1945–1955* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 30.

<sup>62</sup> Uta Poiger talks much about the volume of amateur jazz musicians in her work *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*. She mentions a number of amateur jazz festivals in West Germany, which also provides further insight on the importance and visibility of amateur jazz musicians in the West German music scene, 160.

immediately apparent that music would serve as a public symbol of the occupiers' intentions, and of their commitment to high value. With incredible rapidity, a sense of competition emerged between the four wartime Allies, and there was an unseemly scramble for the cultural high ground. This competition was literally played out in front of the German public, and resulted in the quick revival of concerts in cities and towns all over Germany. Supported by Military Governments, occupation personnel, and the German people, an incredibly rich musical life developed alongside conditions of appalling hardship.”<sup>63</sup>

While the Allies prohibited the performance of National Socialist music during this time, other types of music were re-introduced into German society. This music included works by non-German composers, German Jewish composers who had been persecuted, and composers of jazz and other popular styles.<sup>64</sup>

The radio quickly became the most essential vehicle of mass media and cultural proliferation during the post-war years. The end of the National Socialist era saw the return of composers, works, and stylistic genres that had heretofore been restricted from the German public. Although there was a moderately strong interest in propagating and promoting the music of each occupying country, Germans too were very open to the establishment of a more diverse musical landscape. German musicians particularly enjoyed the variety of familiar composers that had been eliminated as well as new, unfamiliar ones. Composers whose works were frequently performed before the Nazi regime included Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler, while composers such as Shostakovich, Britten, Poulenc, and Messiaen were representative of new, previously

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<sup>63</sup> Thacker, 30.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 76.

unfamiliar composers.<sup>65</sup> German musicians were able, from the beginning, to participate in the new, rich, and diverse music industry.<sup>66</sup> The primary mechanism for spreading new music to the German populace was radio broadcasting via the numerous public stations already established throughout West Germany.

Rainer Bratfisch, in an affirmation of the significance of radio and the dissemination of Western jazz in the new German cultural landscape, states that, “The most important vehicle in the popularization of jazz during the post war years was the radio.”<sup>67</sup> The radio served as the Germans’ cultural pipeline to the West, as a source of information on American politics, life, and music. Although crafted for a US military listening audience, one might imagine that the Allied broadcasters and programmers were well aware of their German audiences and the potential impact these broadcasts could have on the listening civilian public.

The creation and regulation of the West German broadcasting stations differed vastly from their East German counterparts. Military governments, which occupied the Western German zone after 1945, helped the German federal states to establish institutions for public law and governmental bodies. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, these institutions were self-regulated, unlike those in East Germany, which were government-regulated radio stations established in 1945. West German radio stations

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 75, 80, 85.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 33. While ample opportunities were provided for German musicians to play for Allied troops and German audiences, performances more than often had an anti-Fascist agenda. Many works selected were not only overplayed, but were sometimes unfinished by the composer, such as the performance of an unfinished opera by Strauss. The opera’s title is not included in Thacker’s book.

<sup>67</sup> Rainer Bratfisch, *Freie Töne – Die Jazzszenen in der DDR* (Berlin: Links Verlag, 2005), 26.

were established with regional control under one central location. Then, each subsequent state existed under the umbrella of one of these broader, regionally situated organizational bodies.

As an example of the kind of central organization typical of West Germany, one must look at the proliferation of regional radio stations. The state of Northrhine-Westfalia was placed under a radio broadcasting network called the *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk* (NWDR), with a central office located in Hamburg.<sup>68</sup> A broadcasting board that consisted of members from organizations in each community (churches, unions, political parties, *et cetera*) would elect an artistic director, called an *Intendant*. He was responsible for the programming of each radio station. Programs were (and still are) selected by the states, by members of this broadcasting board. Not only was it the committee's responsibility to elect the artistic director, but it was also part of their duty to aid the *Intendant* in making programming decisions.<sup>69</sup>

The infrastructure of German radio was devastated during the war, but made great strides during post-war reconstruction. The American Forces Network (AFN) had begun to air radio broadcasts from Great Britain to various military bases in 1943. After the war, the AFN continued to broadcast radio shows to both military bases and to the German public; initially a challenge, given the degree of dilapidation of the technical infrastructure in Germany. These shows were aired from several newly established AFN

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<sup>68</sup> Ansgar Diller, "Rundfunk und Fernsehen- Besatzungszeit," In *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, edited by Ludwig Finscher (Kassel, Germany: Bärenreiter, 1994), 614.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. The NWDR's *Intendant* was also called Generaldirektor.

stations in Germany, many of which remain functional to the present day.<sup>70</sup> In other European countries, the AFN had removed its broadcasting stations shortly after the end of World War II, but retained its strong presence in Germany to provide American soldiers with popular music from home, and to introduce and propagate American culture and ideology in Germany. German musicians and jazz aficionados welcomed the influx of American jazz and swing broadcasts on the AFN. It was an easy way to reconnect with the ever-changing jazz idiom.<sup>71</sup> These broadcasts re-introduced Germans to jazz, particularly to the more modern sounds like 1930's American swing and especially 1940's early bebop, from which they had been sheltered during and prior to the war, and allowed for an exposure to this music without having to leave their homes. Moreover, it cost audiences nothing. Most important to the US Allies, it was one of the many ways to educate German youth in American values.

Following the war, German citizens slowly began to regain their financial standing. The economy recovered and made more discretionary money available to individuals and businesses. With these surplus funds on hand, Germans found themselves purchasing radios, record players, and televisions. This quickly began to transform how

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<sup>70</sup> United States, *History of AFRTS, the First 50 Years* ([Alexandria, Virginia]: American Forces Information Service and Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, 1993), 52-53.

<sup>71</sup> Jazz critic and well-known radio talk show host Karlheinz Drechsler notes in an interview that he and his friends would sit around the radio and excitedly transcribe melodies as they were broadcasted. Author and jazz critic Theo Lehmann notes that he also spend nearly every night listening and studying music that was aired on AFN. Lehmann called the AFN station his 'university for music studies' (*Musikuniversität*). "Zwischen allen Fronten. Bewegtes Leben: Der Rundfunkjournalist Karlheinz Drechsel," *Jazzzeitung* 3 (2004); Michael Rauhut, *Bye bye, Lübben City, Bluesfreaks, Tramps and Hippies in der DDR* (Berlin: Forschungszentrum Populäre Musik der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2004).



families or couples were spending evenings together. Rather than going dancing or seeking out live entertainment, there were alternative entertainment options with professional music that could come directly into the home. In addition, families could purchase LP's to listen repeatedly to beloved recordings. And, given how readily LPs were available, this mode of acquiring new musical knowledge became the norm. However, jazz was predominantly played only at night on the various American broadcast stations and LP versions of imported American jazz artists were not widely available until the 1950's. Even in the 1950's, imports were still limited in numbers and expensive when they were available.

Dance bands and their associated culture, which had been very alive and popular in the pre-war era, returned after the war, to a reduced extent and with only a modicum of change. German citizens who had access to radio had heard music from the US Allied forces during the war on AFN radio broadcasts. This kept a minority of Germans apprised of the changes in, and subsequent decline of swing, and aware of some of the new repertoire: popular American swing tunes and early tunes in the bebop style.<sup>72</sup> Many of the dance bands also lost influence because attendance dropped at dance halls, venues were unable to compensate the musicians adequately, and they were not booking the same number of groups as before the war. Critics in America held bebop responsible for the post-war decline of swing, especially in the light of the infamous recording bans of 1942 and 1948. However, bebop was too foreign sounding to the Germans, who were about fifteen years behind in following the sound of jazz due to the censorship of the

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<sup>72</sup> Especially tunes by/featuring prominent bebop pioneers such as Don Byas, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, George Wallington, Oscar Pettiford, and Max Roach.

Nazi party, and who had not therefore followed the same musical developments as the Americans. Germans did not have the same opportunities as their American counterparts to change their taste in jazz styles. The venues for swing were now military bases and ballrooms. The audience was older now, and with children. They were predominantly composed of military personnel, middle-aged Germans, and a smattering of youth who gained an appreciation for and interest in the music of their parents. Generally though, youth culture sought out a different kind of “hot” music: Rock n’ Roll.<sup>73</sup> Some artists who had populated Allied air waves during the war and who subsequently regained an importance in German swing bands immediately following the war were Jimmy Dorsey & his orchestra, Johnny Mercer, Irving Berlin, Bing Crosby, Duke Ellington & His Orchestra, Cole Porter, Harry James & his orchestra, Louis Armstrong, Ira Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Frank Loesser, Les Brown & his orchestra, Bud Green, and Vaughn Monroe & his orchestra. The changing swing culture in Germany was a predecessor to the emergent, more modern bands that gradually became the norm in the German jazz scene in the 1950’s.<sup>74</sup> A great deal of scholarship deals with the decline of swing in the U.S. in the post-war era, and will therefore not be discussed here in detail.<sup>75</sup> In chapter 1, I alluded to the establishment and early organization of radio broadcasting stations in Germany. The NWDR and its subsidiary, the NWDR-Cologne, what would come to be

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<sup>73</sup> For further information regarding German youth and rock music, see Poiger’s *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*. Poiger discusses in detail the social issues and musical changes that both East and West Germany underwent during the 1950’s.

<sup>74</sup> David Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big Band Jazz in New Deal America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 181.

<sup>75</sup> For additional information on post-WWII swing decline see also Stowe, *Swing Changes*, and Erenberg, *Swingin’ the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture*.

known as the WDR, were both important to this early development. The NWDR and its Cologne subsidiary were established in 1948, shortly after the NWDR had established a transmitter system in Cologne. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the mission of every Western German radio station at the time was grounded in the basic law (*Grundgesetz*) of 1949. The prime objective was to educate the public in cultural, political, and social affairs—objectives that are still in place to the present day. The musical mission, which was part of the cultural arm of the *Grundgesetz*, will be the focus here.

Jack Bornoff, a British intelligence officer, was in charge of and responsible for the musical supervision of the NWDR.<sup>76</sup> This meant that Bornoff was merely a representative of the British government, and did not have executive power to create his own music program, but rather enforced musical choices handed down by government officials. However, Bornoff and his staff in Hamburg (and later Cologne) were left in charge of the “light music” department – *light* was a designation for popular and easy listening music, as opposed to the *heavier*, more cerebral classical or even jazz musics.<sup>77</sup> While local supervisors could determine musical repertoire, the mandate from the British forces was “...that the existing radio orchestra was used, but that this played “light music”, rather than “proper jazz”.... [and that] it was not British policy to introduce jazz.”<sup>78</sup> Thus the existing radio orchestra, previously established to record all kinds of music for the radio station, was relegated to a “light music” industry.

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<sup>76</sup> Thacker, 90.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Several ensembles evolved quickly between the years 1945-1950. Musical Supervisor Jack Bornoff mandated that the broadcasting station employ a full-time symphony orchestra. He established and hired an orchestra that resembled the BBC orchestra in repertorial mission as well as structural composition. The members of this new orchestra consisted mostly of former radio orchestra members and a handful of newcomers. These new recruits were famous, regionally and nationally, from across Germany and Austria, and were hired to strategically aid the orchestra in becoming a household name. While the symphony orchestra became the flagship ensemble of the NWDR, as they were at all radio broadcast stations in Germany at this time, other broadcasting stations decided to model themselves after the successes of the NWDR station. As a result of the establishment of other orchestras and ensembles in West Germany, a healthy rivalry was fostered between the various radio broadcasting stations. By the end of the 1950's, the stations mentioned in the preceding chapter were employing hundreds of musicians for their in-house broadcasting symphony orchestras, choirs, chamber ensembles, and dance bands. Many of them were performing in multiple ensembles as "doublers."<sup>79</sup> For example, woodwind players often would have the ability to perform on several instruments such as clarinet, flute, and saxophone. Brass players that were originally hired to play trombone might also occasionally get hired to play euphonium. Because all broadcasting stations were passionate about creating diversity in programming, the musical repertoire became quite eclectic. However, this variety still only focused on musical styles that, for the *Intendant* and his board, represented a

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 90.

“highbrow” aesthetic at the time. Their musical selections were still chiefly influenced by the foundation of musical mandates set forth by the British government in the 1940’s. From large symphonic works, to Jewish Klesmer music, to late night “hot” arrangements for dance orchestra, radio stations re-introduced Germans to world musics that were deemed “artful.”

Executives of the NWDR re-introduced and overwhelmingly included music that had been prohibited by the National Socialist party as a way to align themselves with the ideologies of the Allied forces. This was, in part, due to the appointment of non-German military officials as programmers. They tended to subsequently promote the ideological objectives of their respective countries. Thus, Jack Bornoff insisted that Jewish music and, of course, British music be broadcasted frequently on air.<sup>80</sup> This overwhelmingly anti-German musical ethos eventually led to a demonstration by German composers in 1953.<sup>81</sup> As a result, the musical programming in the later 1950’s was redirected to include a wider range of German music at the NWDR.<sup>82</sup> One year later, the NWDR created a new radio show called *Music Knows No Borders*, to emphasize their recognition of this new diversity.<sup>83</sup>

In 1946, NWDR music supervisor Ken Bartlett, who had been appointed regional supervisor for musical affairs by Bornoff, approached well-known Berlin-based bandleader Hans Bund to join the broadcasting station with his band.<sup>84</sup> Hans Bund, a

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 90.

trained pianist, composer, and conductor had successfully led a popular touring professional jazz orchestra. The ensemble, then called *Hans Bund Jazz Orchestra*, had received many accolades during the 1930's and frequently played for live events, films, and cabarets. Bund was also engaged in other musical collaborations and demonstrated at the onset of his career that his conducting and arranging talents reached far beyond the popular music realm. To Bartlett, Bund seemed like the perfect fit for the vision of the broadcasting network – he had a national reputation, a dual competence in both serious and popular music, a connection to other performers in Germany, and he had a respected, established dance band. Further, it was common that radio stations hired versatile musicians to play and compose various types of music for live shows. This hiring trend had existed before the outbreak of World War II and was reinstated as radio stations re-established themselves in West Germany during the late 1940's.<sup>85</sup> With Bund facing severely restricted performance opportunities during the years after the war, Bartlett easily persuaded him and his band to join the NWDR. Bund and his fourteen-piece band

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<sup>85</sup> In contrast to this development, it is interesting to note that the live musician tradition had nearly vanished in the United States at this point. Elijah Wild notes in his book *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) that in America, the tradition of hiring live musicians for radio shows had flourished during the 1930s, when record label executives were opposed to the playing of records as part of radio broadcasts. Recording jackets during the 1930s often included the label “not licensed for radio broadcast,” to avoid decreasing record sales and performer's profits during live concert performances. Any record including this imprint made it illegal to be played and broadcasted on the radio due to copyright laws. While this thesis does not intend to compare and contrast the history of radio broadcasting between Germany and the United States, this further highlights how many aspects of German culture and society continually lacked behind after World War II well into the 1950's. For more information on copyright, see Wild's chapter 7 in *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll*, pp. 84-96.

agreed to join the same year. He soon was asked by the music supervisor to expand the jazz orchestra into a thirty-five-piece band, which would be known as the *Kölner Tanz und Unterhaltungs Orchester* (KTUO), a dance band with strings. This new constellation fell into place one year after Bund's arrival at the network, in 1947.<sup>86</sup> He wanted to be more involved with serious art music at the broadcasting station. Consequently, the NWDR hired nationally acclaimed bandleader Adalbert Luczkowski to assume the direction of the KTUO.<sup>87</sup> The Hans Bund orchestra, with its original constituency of fourteen members, still remained an in-house ensemble after the establishment of the KTUO, but was not directed by Bund himself, but rather by August Kreuter, another significant German musical figure in the employ of the NWDR-Cologne.<sup>88</sup> The Hans Bund orchestra remained at the NWDR-Cologne into the 1950's.<sup>89</sup>

The newly established KTUO was not much different from the dance band configuration that was used widely during the 1930's. The KTUO employed the traditional German instrumentation for dance orchestras – big band with strings. The big band included a seventeen-piece orchestration, still common today, which was regularized during the 1950's. This instrumentation consisted of two alto saxophones,

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<sup>86</sup> WDR/HAC D756, "Aufstellung des Kölner Rundfunk-Tanzorchesters," Stand vom 17.9.1947, in Thacker, 193.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Westdeutscher Rundfunk, *Zwanzig Jahre Musik im Westdeutschen Rundfunk: Eine Dokumentation der Hauptabteilung Musik 1948-1968* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln, 1968), XV.

<sup>89</sup> An exact date of the disbandment of the Hans Bund Orchester is not indicated in the historiography of the the broadcasting station. The mentioning of the Hans Bund Orchester is discontinued after 1958. It appears that in place of the Hans Bund Orchester is the Kleines Unterhaltungsorchester, a twelve piece entertainment band that continued to work under the NWDR umbrella until July 31, 1968. In *Zwanzig Jahre Musik im Westdeutschen Rundfunk*, XVI.

two tenor saxophones, one baritone saxophone, four trumpets, four trombones, piano, drums, guitar, and double bass. The number of string musicians used at a given time cannot be ascertained as this changed with the repertoire and with various live concerts.<sup>90</sup> However, one source does mention that the KTUO employed thirty musicians at the time of the band's establishment in 1948.<sup>91</sup> By 1958, the ensemble consisted of thirty-three musicians, and thirty-one musicians in 1968. Therefore it can be assumed that the KTUO varied the number of string players based on the needs in arrangements and performance venues. More strings were employed when larger works were performed or when performance venues demanded increased amplification. As recorded documentation of these early performances does not exist it is hard to estimate a range for the number of string players used. However, the information we do have concerning other groups from this time period suggests a wide range of possibilities: from a small string presence to a fairly full string orchestration. We can also safely assume that vocalists were used at times, though again, no documentation exists. It is probable that the KTUO utilized the strings to create a calm, soothing sound, similar to German dance orchestras of the 1930's. This trend had taken hold a few years earlier in the United States, for example with Paul Whiteman and his jazz orchestra with strings.

The swooning sounds of the new KTUO dance orchestra combined with arrangements of other dance musicians and arrangers like Kurt Edelhagen and the prolific writer Kurt Feltz. Feltz's music "suggest[ed] a distinct continuity with post-war

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<sup>90</sup> For the number of musicians involved in the KTUO, see *Zwanzig Jahre Musik im Westdeutschen Rundfunk*, XIV-XVI.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.



escapism,” which after the war was strongly desired in Germany and which the NWDR programmed to meet this need.<sup>92</sup> However, this programming trend became controversial. Letters of complaint were drafted to the popular *Hörzu* magazine (see pages 16-17 in chapter 1), the simple statement that audiences were unhappy with this programming, without explanation. Thacker asserts in *Music after Hitler*, that “...with musicians like Luczkowski and Feltz in charge, jazz was confined to the margins.”<sup>93</sup> Perhaps this marginalization and polite but dismissive treatment of jazz and popular music offended the Germans’ desire for broad and diverse music in the post-war era.

It can be assumed that the KTUO performed frequently for NWDR-Cologne sponsored events, though it is unlikely that the ensemble performed much beyond these broadcasting station engagements during the 1950’s. Performances by the KTUO increased in later decades, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. The players had committed to working for the broadcasting station full-time, and as the orchestra belonged to the network, it was difficult to schedule independent performances. The extent to which the KTUO performed at all during the twenty years since its inception in 1948 is hard to determine. This is in large part because the in-house published historiography of the NWDR, now WDR, broadcasting station, *Zwanzig Jahre Musik im Westdeutschen Rundfunk*, does not list *any* events that could be associated with popular entertainment music. Most of the historical documentation for this time period must rely on anecdotal and a few second-hand accounts that survive. In fact, the only mention of

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<sup>92</sup> Thacker, 193.

<sup>93</sup> For further discourse on the marginalization of jazz at the time, Thacker also alludes to Reinhardt Farks book *Die Missachtete Botschaft: Aspekte des Jazz im soziokulturellen Wandel* (Berlin: Spiess, 1971).

dance bands in the *Zwanzig Jahre Musik im Westdeutschen Rundfunk* can be found on the introductory pages of the historical treatment. More information could be found in archival materials of the WDR broadcasting headquarters in Cologne, but are not available for public inspection at this point. Further investigation will undoubtedly reveal much more about the first decades in the history and development of the KTUO.

*Zwanzig Jahre Musik im Westdeutschen Rundfunk* has meticulously catalogued every performance both in and outside of the broadcasting station for all classical ensembles at functions, festivals, and collaborations with outside musicians, but excludes any data regarding the involvement of the dance bands. Ironically, the authors of this history chose to give it a title that gives the impression that *all* music that was played or aired on the NWDR is included.

Dance band musicians usually gravitated toward larger cities in hopes of securing a full-time job with a broadcasting station ensemble. These were very sought-after positions because the pay and benefits were respectable. Most dance halls in Germany were closed or in ruins after the war, which left the dance band members out of jobs. Executives of the broadcasting station knew that these excellent dance band musicians were without employment and desperate to work, and subsequently approached the musicians with lucrative contracts. They invited or auditioned the musicians to play for the NWDR-Cologne on a full-time basis with a salary and with ample playing opportunities. However, these musicians were required to sign an exclusivity clause in their contracts stating that they would only play for the NWDR-Cologne. Many musicians accepted the offer, content to have secured employment. Further, the job

offered a range of playing opportunities in all types of music. It was not uncommon for a dance band member to be hired as a free-lance musician for concerts of other chamber groups or large ensemble works that required more players. Musicians were not the only ones to enjoy the versatility of their jobs, though. Composers and arrangers greatly benefitted from the multi-talented musician pool, too. The sheer volume of musicians enabled them to program large orchestral works, and the instant availability of musicians enabled them to score for new ensemble configurations and hybrid genres that had not been performed much, if ever before.<sup>94</sup> Creative freedom was encouraged and desired by broadcasting boards, in a continued attempt to outdo programming choices that other broadcasting stations offered. The new band established by the NWDR-Cologne still played a great deal of music reminiscent of the repertoire of former German dance orchestras. Even as dance bands moved aggressively toward playing more jazz, the music they produced did not particularly resemble the same “jazz” that was being performed in the United States. The musical spectrum ranged from swing and bebop through *Schlager*, German for “hit” or pop tune.<sup>95</sup> This early mix of disparate genres was a result of Germans’ weak attempt to imitate these unfamiliar sounds from abroad. The process of imitation was an important part of the re-establishment of a German popular music voice. Though the initial attempts at popular music after the war were less than noteworthy, they still acted as an important catalyst for change.

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<sup>94</sup> The chronological order of concerts between 1950-1968 in *Zwanzig Jahre Musik im Westdeutschen Rundfunk* lists several concerts that include performances of hybrid styles, like pieces for strings and two jazz combos, classical vocal soloists with dance band and so on.

<sup>95</sup> Lange, 119, 151-152; Kater, 203.

Even though the NWDR-Cologne band began to utilize the rhythmic concepts and swing feel of jazz, the band effectually remained a “dance band” until the 1950’s. This was in large part because the term “dance band” was still familiar to Germans, and because the term “jazz” was still negatively associated with American propaganda and an attempt to instill certain values and an American-minded cultural system in Germany.<sup>96</sup> Ragtime, jazz, Swing and other popular music was still associated with a modernist society, one that the German government had banned for over a decade. While jazz and other popular music seemed intriguing at first, it began to be neglected and publicly opposed by German audiences because of its possible association with propaganda by the allies. Further, many believed that Americans were not very cultured.<sup>97</sup> The German federal state institutions needed to provide music programs that would foster the development of a new, rich “highbrow” musical culture, to which they believed jazz, as American popular music, did not belong. The reputation of jazz remained perceived as a “lowbrow” music, especially since it remained a genre that was played mostly in bars and clubs.

In 1954, broadcasting stations underwent dramatic changes in organizational structure. This happened because of newly passed laws supporting radio broadcasting and the ongoing efforts of broadcasting networks to create smaller, more regionally-based

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<sup>96</sup> Poiger further mentions in *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels* (p.1) that “by the late 1950’s, however, city officials were opening jazz clubs for adolescents all over West Germany, and the West German defense minister announced that jazz was a proper music for the West German army.”

<sup>97</sup> Thacker, 76, 92.

broadcasting stations.<sup>98</sup> It appears that this restructuring did not affect the purpose or mission of the KTUO. During this time, the only noticeable change was in the number of musicians during the 1950's and 1960's. To date, there remains no public record of the type of music that was predominantly performed into the 1960's with the KTUO. What we do know is that during the 1960's, the band had a new leader, Werner Müller. A well known and established bandleader, Müller was originally from Berlin, and had worked there as the head of the well-known *Tanzorchester des RIAS (Dance Orchestra of Radio in the American Sector)*.<sup>99</sup>

The KTUO, like any group, evolved over time while reacting to its changing environment. Jazz and popular music in the 1960's in the United States was changing rapidly and one can imagine the confusion for Germans following it from across the Atlantic. The 1960's saw an unbelievable variety in jazz artists – the same time period in which Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington were still performing and recording saw the emergence of and increasing importance of artists like Thelonius Monk, Eric Dolphy, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, and Freddie Hubbard. Indeed, other popular music icons like James Brown, Aretha Franklin, The Who, Jimi Hendrix, and Led Zeppelin were also notable artists during the same time period. We know that today's WDR Big Band draws

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<sup>98</sup> Diller, 615. For further reading on the development of broadcasting stations see Paulu Burton, *Radio and Television Broadcasting on the European Continent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967); Hans Bausch, ed., *Rundfunk in Deutschland* (Munich: DTV Verlag, 1980); Oliver Fix, *Organisation des Rundfunks. Stand und Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten* (Deutschland: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 1997).

<sup>99</sup> WDR, "Big Band Porträt," Westdeutscher Rundfunk, [http://www.wdr.de/radio/orchester/bigband/portraet/weiterleitung\\_portraet.html](http://www.wdr.de/radio/orchester/bigband/portraet/weiterleitung_portraet.html) (accessed March 26, 2011).

on many musical influences for its musical compositions. It is logical to infer that much of the cross-integration of jazz and alternate popular genres began in the 1960's, at the same time we see this type of cross-pollination occurring elsewhere in the musical world (eg., surf music, motown, rock, R&B, and many others). Rock, for instance, drew on blues vernacular, country, rockabilly, folk, boogie woogie, rhythm and blues and more. Accordingly, scholarship that addresses the development of jazz ensembles around the world, would be remiss to overlook the hybridization that occurred so vigorously during this time period in the US and Britain. The dramatic effects of this hybridization and the global ramification on the music industry are well documented. However, the NWDR of the 1960's did not support jazz. To be sure, they funded and employed a group that played jazz, but only under the moniker of a "dance orchestra." The broadcasting station did not view jazz as equal to classical or other "high-brow" musics. The musicians were still jazz musicians though and were seeking out the latest trends and new artists. Import restrictions were lifted at this time and recordings from the US were more available. Since the 1950's, the NWDR had, however, been airing talk shows that mentioned cool jazz and free jazz. This included, for example, a show entitled *Vom Organum zum Cool Jazz* (from organum to Cool Jazz), hosted by Joachim-Ernst Berendt and Josef Tröller.<sup>100</sup>

The decline of swing bands and dance bands forced groups to take a different course as the German radio broadcasting system expanded during the 1950's and 60's.

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<sup>100</sup> Westdeutscher Rundfunk, *Zwanzig Jahre im Westdeutschen Rundfunk*, 109, 136: This show was aired first on April 25, 1956 and again on October 10 in 1956. On January 29, 1958 they aired a show entitled "Eindrücke aus Amerika" (Impressions from America). While the detailed content of this show is not known, it can be assumed that popular music, including jazz, was part of the show's content.

The KTUO band, the early predecessor of the WDR Big Band, was employed by the radio broadcasting station and transformed into a modern big band in the 1980's as will be discussed in the next chapter. This development reshaped and refocused the band's efforts on classic big band jazz, and would replace the mission of playing Swing and dance music. While the KTUO band was originally modeled on the traditional German dance orchestra, by the late 1950's a few changes were made. Leadership began to turn over, and the string section slowly diminished in size. Along with a reduced string section, the band began to transform into an ensemble that did not merely imitate the music and performance practice of the past, but slowly began to explore more contemporary jazz styles. This was a welcome change among band members who had grown weary of merely performing old popular music styles. Broadcasting stations still insisted on controlling the programming. Individual artistic decisions were limited to a very few bandleaders, composers, and arrangers, and only permitted as long as they stayed within the artistic guidelines of the broadcasting station. Because of a lack of creative responsibility, musicians became discouraged. Conventional approaches of performances in dance bands had been a tradition of the past, but as rebellion against these traditions arose with the beginnings of the Cold war in the 1950's, the musical landscape changed. While fast linear lines and complicated chromatic chord changes were some of the characteristics of change in the jazz idiom of the 1950's and 1960's in America, jazz players in Germany at radio broadcasting stations did not experience this sense of freedom and transformation-- an artistic development they had hoped for during

the post-war years. In the final chapter, I shall trace the change and evolution of the newer jazz idioms in the jazz bands of the German broadcast system during the 1960's.



## A MODERN BIG BAND: THE WDR BIG BAND - 1980's TO THE PRESENT

This chapter will present an analysis of the stylistic and extramusical changes that the KTUO band made in order to transform into a modern big band during the 1980's. I will then take a look at the early years of the newly established WDR Big Band, considering the personnel choices that the broadcasting station made, as well as stylistic practices of the WDR Big Band. Further, I will examine the role that progressive American jazz bands, composers, and arrangers may have played in the stylistic choices of the WDR Big Band, by considering selected professional American big bands and their leaders of the same time period and investigating their organizational structure through review of articles, jazz journals, and interviews with jazz performers who played in both America and Germany. I will examine the later years of the WDR Big Band to the present day, including changes in direction it has taken to stay on the edge of modern big band sounds, and further collaborations they began with American jazz artists. This chapter will conclude by discussing the results of this investigation, as well as implications for future research. With the steep decline of a jazz audience at the end of the twentieth century, I will examine whether the WDR Big Band experienced hardship and drawbacks or whether the new millennium has opened new opportunities for the ensemble. I will conclude the chapter by re-examining the role of the WDR Big Band and comparing it to the role it had at its inception.

After 1982, the ensemble now designated the “WDR Big Band” slowly began to gain an independent voice in the jazz community. The band metamorphosed into a modern jazz ensemble, drawing influences from the United States while creating and establishing its own independent voice. It did not necessarily imitate American bands either musically or organizationally, but in movement towards performances in educational settings, such as college campuses and high schools. It was during this critical period that the band developed a reputation for an authentic personal voice.

The WDR Big Band also gained status as an ambassador for educational outreach, promoting in-school jazz education and appearing at school events, inter-scholastic festivals, and also in colleges and universities. In addition, many of the members taught, and still teach today, in local colleges and universities as well as offering private instruction. Behind this emphasis on teaching is likely a passion to keep jazz alive and also an effort to accrue additional income through outside sources. The educational mission of the band has paralleled similar developments in jazz bands in the United States. Some early examples of bands performing in an educational context, particularly on college campuses, would include the Dave Brubeck Quartet and the Modern Jazz Quartet. Later bands exercising this role would include the Toshiko Akiyoshi band, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, the Bob Brookmeyer Jazz Orchestra, the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, the Village Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and many other jazz orchestras and small ensembles.

Before the 1980’s, the WDR and its band underwent significant structural changes. This began with the massive structural change within the broadcasting system.

As alluded to in Chapter 2, on May 12 of 1954, the state court in Northrhine-Westphalia passed a law to allow the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* (WDR) to become independent from its umbrella organization, the NWDR. By February of 1955, the NWDR was split into two separate, regionally-controlled broadcasters, the *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* (NDR) in the north and the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* (WDR) in the North Rhine-Westphalia state. Through the 1960's, the NDR continued to be broadcast and controlled through Hamburg, while the WDR radio broadcasting station developed into its own entity controlled and regulated in Cologne, with radio programs specifically geared towards audiences in Northrhine-Westphalia. During this time, the separation only occurred in the radio broadcasting division. The NWDR television division continued to be operated jointly under the name *Nord- und Westdeutscher Rundfunkverband* (NWRV or North and West German Broadcasting Federation).<sup>101</sup>

It was during the 1960's and 1970's that the band updated its image and public perception, which would help the ensemble to become a legitimate jazz ensemble in the jazz community. As Poiger points out, "By the early 1960's, jazz had clearly gained a measure of acceptance in East and West Germany."<sup>102</sup> Musicologist Andrew Hurley supports this observation. In his book, *The Return of Jazz*, he notes that European jazz has finally broken away from American jazz in the 1970's. He discusses in much greater detail to the changes that began in the 1960's, when European musicians stopped to

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<sup>101</sup> Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, "Kronik 1954," <http://www.geschichte.nrw.de/artikel.php?artikel%5Bid%5D=63&lkz=en> (accessed March 28, 2011).

<sup>102</sup> Poiger, 172, citing Michael Kater, *Different Drummers*.

“blindly” follow the American model.<sup>103</sup> This transition towards independence was a critical move for the WDR Big Band. Though the band was not generally renowned as a “force” in the jazz community at this time, the entire German jazz community was beginning to take on a new individualized personality that blended historicism, modernity, and ethnic music into a new sound, which would become the sonic foundation of the WDR Big Band of the 1980’s. The musicians and musical directors of the band were disinclined to simply copy their American peers now, something which could not have been said of the 1950’s. In the past, German musicians had looked up to the American jazz developments, but after the 1950’s, German musicians had become tired of being known as imitators, not as innovators, especially since Germans, had once been regarded as trendsetters of music. As Hurley puts it,

... how could jazz discourse sustain a claim to high art status and simultaneously allow plagiarism? For many musicians, a significant trigger for the self-reflection actually came, somewhat paradoxically, from developments in the United States itself.”<sup>104</sup>

In other words, as musicians in the United States searched for a fresh and independent voice, Germans imitated this tendency, prompting the Germans’ drift away from bland mimicry of American styles.

To get a better idea of the modern WDR Big Band, one must observe the changes that occurred during the 1960’s and 1970’s. Adalbert Luczkowski was the head of the

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<sup>103</sup> Andrew Hurley, *The Return of Jazz: Joachim-Ernst Berendt and West German Cultural Change*, 88.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 89.

KTUO dance orchestra in the late 1960's and early 1970's.<sup>105</sup> In 1967, Werner Müller was hired by the WDR network to take over the KTUO. Müller had convinced the station to rename the dance orchestra from the KTUO to the "WDR Tanzorchester Werner Müller", which over time became known as simply the "TO," *Tanzorchester* (dance orchestra). During the late 1970's, the entire string section was removed from the dance orchestra. Rather than letting all musicians go, the broadcasting station moved the string players to other radio orchestras of the station. Meanwhile, Kurt Edelhagen had been hired separately by the WDR to run another band, a structurally authentic big band, for the broadcasting station with which he recorded, toured, and broadcasted from 1957 to 1973.<sup>106</sup> Edelhagen's big band saw a good deal of success, though it was never known as the WDR Big Band. Unfortunately, the WDR Tanzorchester Werner Müller could not parallel the successes that Müller and his earlier bands had achieved during his time in Berlin. This had less to do with Müller's leadership and more with the way in which the music industry and listener's demands had changed. Because Rock and Roll, particularly the Beatles, was filling popular music demand in radio broadcasting, dance orchestras had lost most of their airtime. Executives at the WDR had anticipated this and had thought about how one might transform Tanz Orchestra Werner Müller into a modern big band, particularly modeling the new band off the prior successes of Edelhagen's

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<sup>105</sup> WDR, "Big Band Porträt," Westdeutscher Rundfunk, [http://www.wdr.de/radio/orchester/bigband/portraet/weiterleitung\\_portraet.html](http://www.wdr.de/radio/orchester/bigband/portraet/weiterleitung_portraet.html) (accessed March 26, 2011).

<sup>106</sup> Oxford Music Online, "Wdr Big Band (Cologne), Grove Music Online, " [http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.unl.edu:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/J721600?q=wdr+big+band&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.unl.edu:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/J721600?q=wdr+big+band&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) (accessed March 28, 2011).

endeavors.<sup>107</sup> To achieve this goal, it was agreed that the orchestra needed to change the way in which it was operating. As an alternative to looking at the track record of bandleaders and their ensembles, akin to the procedure they had employed since the establishment of the KTUO, executives felt that the most prolific and recognizable jazz musicians from around the globe should be invited as guest artists. These guest artists would take a short-term residency, only for specific productions or events. Further, the board of directors decided to audition each individual part in the band as needed with rigorous audition requirements.<sup>108</sup> Instead of simply auditioning recognized trumpeters or doing an open search for all trumpet players, a search would now be targeted as a “lead trumpet” or “solo/4th trumpet”, thereby identifying prospects that could fill the specific needs of the given chair in the band. This way of auditioning band members did not hurt the ensemble, as prolific musicians still desired to be in the band for the same reasons as before: to be on a salary and to have a full-time job as a musician. It also attracted younger jazz musicians to the band, knowing that they now would have a chance of a

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Players and composers with national or international stature, such as Michael Brecker, Randy Brecker, Till Brönner, Bob Mintzer, Jon Eardley, John Abercrombie, Danny Gottlieb, Airto Moreira, Joe Zawinul, Milt Jackson, Cedar Walton, James Moody, Peter Erskine, Mark Dresser, Jon Faddis, Dave Horler, John Goldsby, Joe Williams, Scott Kinsey, Joyce Moreno, Eddie Harris, Roger Ingram, Abdullah Ibrahim, Wolfgang Niedecken, Biréli Lagrène, Jim Beard, Toni Kitanovski, Franck Amsallem, Dave Liebman, Anne Kerry Ford, Joachim Kühn, Ray Brown, John Clayton, Diana Reeves, Pernell Saturnino, Carolyn Breuer, Rick Kiefer, Will Lee, Dennis Mackrel, Paquito D'Rivera, Jeff Hamilton, Tom Scott, James Morrison, Victor Bailey, Alex Acuña, Joe la Barbera, Lalo Schiffrin, Al di Meola, Vince Mendoza, Marcio Doctor, Bob Brookmeyer, John McNeely, Jiggs Whigham, and others have all been guests of the WDR band and its wide-net approach to building a large fan base and building reputation in the jazz community. Please refer to the Appendix: the Complete WDR Big Band Discography for additional information about specific guest artist appearances.

position without having an established track record. Over time, this specificity with regard to personnel choices led to a much stronger workforce and a dramatically increased technical virtuosity of the band. Finally, it challenged old and new members within the group. Older jazz musicians now had to keep up with current jazz styles and needed to learn how to incorporate new ways of improvisation into their soloing while the younger musicians needed to learn about the older jazz traditions, more specifically traditions of big band playing, to which they had not been exposed to much. Younger musicians of the time would most likely have learned the ropes of jazz playing in smaller jazz combos, settings more common and affordable.

In 1980, the band made the official transition from a dance orchestra to its current title and constituency, the WDR Big Band. This ensemble was modeled after Edelhagen's prior successes.<sup>109</sup> The transition coincided with a new role for the group: recording albums. The year 1982 marked the debut WDR Big Band recording.<sup>110</sup> The WDR stood out in what Stuart Nicholson called the "new classicism" of the 1980's jazz era. As Nicholson puts it in his *The 1980's Resurgence*,

When jazz was believed to be at a dead standstill, with no clear leader at the front to question conventions, a "new classicism" developed in jazz. It alludes to a musical climate in which younger jazz musicians stopped trying to be inventive as others in previous decades had been, but rather to look back at their old heroes and

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<sup>109</sup> Grove Music Online, "Wdr Big Band (Cologne)," [http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.unl.edu:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/J721600?q=wdr+big+band&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.unl.edu:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/J721600?q=wdr+big+band&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) (accessed March 28, 2011).

<sup>110</sup> WDR Big Band Köln, *The Third Stone*, WDR Big Band Köln with Jiggs Whigham et al conducted by Bill Holman (Koala Music CDP4), released by WDR in 1982, re-released by AAD in 1989, compact disc.

tried to imitate them (for the first time in a couple of decades). This “new classicism” became the trademark of the 1980’s.<sup>111</sup>

The WDR, by contrast, was an innovator in the 1980’s, attracting guest artists who did not want to recreate jazz experiences with a repertory band. Innovators, a staple throughout jazz history, wanted to perform for and collaborate with a modern band that was pushing boundaries and creating new sounds. The WDR Big Band began to achieve this within the first decade of their restructuring, even while making respectful nods to the past.

The band created an authentic, individual voice in the jazz world, which both respected the history of the jazz styles from the past while integrating modern composers and guest artists with backgrounds in all jazz styles.<sup>112</sup> Their new musical and structural concepts became an instant success in Germany and around the globe. Collaborations between the band and well respected musicians from around the world became the new standard for the group. While the ensemble benefited greatly from artists temporarily playing with the band, the artists-in-residence also greatly benefited from this collaboration as well. While the honorarium certainly was respectable, the mass exposure through the German broadcasting station to the European jazz community was a great

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<sup>111</sup> Stuart Nicholson, *Jazz: The 1980’s Resurgence* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 6/221; Nicholson proceeds to expound on the concept, stating that “...It was a trend that critic Gary Giddins called ‘neo-classical’ conservatism; a return to the basic principles of hard-bop championed by the Blue Note label of the ‘50s and the acoustic Miles Davis. There was to be no musicological trauma that heralded the arrival of bop or free or the artistic quandary posed by fusion. Instead developments would be measured in terms of individual interpretation and recombinations of existing knowledge.”

<sup>112</sup> The careful selection of guest artists can be seen when comparing albums of any given decade. In the 1980’s for example, artists-in-residence were as diverse as modern big band arranger George Gruntz to the very traditional 1970’s hard bop drummer and bandleader Mel Lewis or the Bebop and hard-bop rooted Benny Bailey.



advertising opportunity for jazz artists. Further, by playing with the WDR Big Band, new connections could be established with the musicians of the band as well as with other German artists who were associated with the band members, or who taught at the University in Cologne. At times, composers or artists who would be invited to perform with the WDR Big Band would be able to contract future residencies or tours through parts of Germany.<sup>113</sup> This is not to say that international artists came to work with the WDR to look for future opportunities, but in the age of dying interest in jazz and plummeting record sales, networking had become crucial to the professional survival of any jazz musician.

In less than a decade, the WDR Big Band had established a reputation as an important artistic force in the modern big band world. Rolf Römer, a 23-year tenor sax veteran of the WDR, describes the excitement of this period of transition for the band in his biography.<sup>114</sup> A new band member in 1981, Römer saw the transition first hand and described the band as having an “innovative programming profile” and as being “stylistically diverse” from the start.<sup>115</sup> This was all during a period in the 1980’s when jazz saw the demise of several legendary big bands.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Among the artists that received continued visibility in Germany are Bob Mintzer, Bob Brookmeyer, Vince Mendoza, Peter Erskine, and Jiggs Whigham.

<sup>114</sup> Ralph Römer, “Bibliographie,” <http://www.rolf-roemer.de/bio.html>, (accessed March 28, 2011).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Nicholson (p.38) in *Jazz: The 1980s Resurgence* discusses the concept of the fall of big bands and the end of the ‘roadband’ in his text, stating, “So the functional role big bands inherited from the swing era continued in the 1980’s; once they existed to provide music for dancing but now they were mainly educational vehicles or ‘Rehearsal Bands,’ forums where like-minded musical craftsmen gathered to sharpen their skills. In such settings there was a tendency, observed by Toshiko Akiyoshi, of ‘being what a big band

The continued development of a global jazz community is one of the chief reasons that the art form survived during the 1980's.<sup>117</sup> Throughout the history of jazz, European audiences had been accepting of all streams of jazz, and continued to welcome new styles and orchestrations, to the extent that several jazz record labels were set up in Europe. Germany's two significant labels during the 1980's were JMT and ECM. Each gave jazz musicians the opportunity to record their "authentic" sound instead of forcing them to try to play in the fusion style that was one of the popular jazz trends in the United States at the time.<sup>118</sup> In fact, many musicians rejected fusion and its popular implications. There were still listeners who "demanded more sophisticated music that wasn't teenage-centered."<sup>119</sup> The WDR band embraced this mission, collaborating with jazz stars such as Bob Brookmeyer, Jiggs Whigham, Benny Bailey, Mel Lewis, Bill Holman, and Bob Mintzer during the 1980's. Further, it became obvious that German audiences now were

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is supposed to be' (Downbeat v.49 n.11). The end 1980's saw the end of the 'Roadband' and the demise of several of the legendary big band names. It should have seemed like the end of an era. But it didn't; big bands were scarcely in short supply, but new ideas were. The idiom had not so much moved forward since the swing era as constantly rationalized with hindsight." New important big bands that saw their unraveling beginning in the 1980's include Toshiko Akiyoshi, the Count Basie Orchestra, Buddy Rich Big Band, Stan Kenton Big Band, and the Duke Ellington Band, under Mercer Ellington's direction after the 'Duke' had passed in 1974.

<sup>117</sup> Nicholson, 312.

<sup>118</sup> While the style of fusion had emerged in the late 1960's and into the 1970's, by fusing rock elements with jazz, the style and its characteristics, such as using electronic instruments and more accessible melodies, pervaded into the 1980's. For more information see Grove Music Online, "Fusion Rock" [http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.unl.edu:80/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e3533?q=fusion+jazz&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1#firsthit](http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.library.unl.edu:80/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e3533?q=fusion+jazz&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit) (accessed on April 5, 2011).

<sup>119</sup> Nicholson in *Jazz: The 1980s Resurgence* proceeds to observe (p.222) that, "Jazz during the 1980's had returned to its most accessible sounds since the 1950s. More sophisticated listeners also appreciated seeing musicians such as Wynton Marsalis being well versed in both the classical and jazz idioms. Marsalis "had 'style', and his sartorial elegance became widely associated with the 'new jazz'."

ready for a modern big band with a new and fresh mission. The WDR Big Band, among others that developed at broadcasting stations during that time, was a band that had the capacity to be modern and cutting-edge. For too long, the radio orchestras had been relegated to pure entertainment music in dance halls and ballrooms and now, the WDR Big Band could redefine its role. These important collaborations with innovative voices in the jazz community helped to validate that new role for the band.

In addition to American guest artists and collaborators, the WDR Big Band sought to involve collaborations with non-American jazz artists that had an international reputation in jazz. Notable examples included Django Reinhardt (a Belgian guitarist), Joe Zawinul (an Australian keyboardist), and John McLaughlin (a British guitarist). This practice continues to the present day. Individuals who have established a reputation on an international level receive an invitation to record or perform with the group. Often, these foreign musicians are leaders in certain jazz genres and supersede their American counterparts.<sup>120</sup>

In 1985, Jerry van Rooyen was named the musical director of the ensemble and would remain with the broadcasting station for nine years, until 1994, with Bill Dobbins following van Rooyen through 2002. Under the direction of van Rooyen, the band made

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<sup>120</sup> For example, guitarist John McLaughlin was one of the leading fusion guitarists in the world, while keyboardist Joe Zawinul, along with his group *Weather Report*, became one of the classic groups for early fusion. This is not to say that the reputation of these ensembles solely weighted on the reputation of their respective front men. In fact, Zawinul collaborated with American saxophonist Wayne Shorter to establish *Weather Report*, while McLaughlin's *Mahavishnu Orchestra* consisted of many American players. But the leaders' compositional styles, uniqueness in orchestration, and textural innovations quickly became known in the jazz community and were soon applied by musicians worldwide, in the fusion vein as well as in modern big band settings.

perhaps its biggest strides musically, and enjoyed visibility on an international level. During Dobbins' tenure as band leader, he hosted an eclectic group of international artists that included Clark Terry, Dave Liebman, Randy Brecker, Gary Bartz, Kevin Mahogany, Art Farmer, Steve Lacy, Paquito D'Rivera, Mark Feldman, Clare Fischer, Peter Erskine, the King's Singers, and Katia & Marielle Labèque.<sup>121</sup> From Fall 2003 onward, internationally renowned jazz composer, arranger, pianist, and producer Michael Abene has been the acting musical director.<sup>122</sup> In addition, Abene, also an American, has served as the principal arranger for the group during his time there. He also continues in his role as an educator at the Manhattan School of Music, as well as accepting commissions worldwide and travelling extensively.<sup>123</sup> It is significant that both Dobbins and Abene were well known and internationally acclaimed American jazz artists/composers before they were approached by the WDR for these posts. There could be three different reasons for this. First, the WDR Big Band might be attempting to gain a following and reputation in the United States via associations with well recognized American artists at the helm. Or, they might be attempting to continue to satisfy an American jazz "legitimacy" issue that may still exist in the minds of the Germans listeners who frequent their concerts and buy their albums. Or, it might be a combination of both of these scenarios that led them to these personnel decisions. It is also important to note that since 1994 the directorship

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<sup>121</sup> Eastman School of Music, "Bill Dobbins Faculty Biography," [http://www.esm.rochester.edu/faculty/dobbins\\_bill](http://www.esm.rochester.edu/faculty/dobbins_bill) (accessed March 28, 2011).

<sup>122</sup> Manhattan School of Music, "Michael Abene Faculty Biography," <http://www.msmnyc.edu/catalog/facbio.asp?fid=1008173041> (accessed March 28, 2011).

<sup>123</sup> WDR, "Wir über uns, Chefdirigent, Michael Abene," Westdeutscher Rundfunk, [http://www.wdr.de/unternehmen/service/infomaterial/pdf/wbb\\_saisonbro\\_2010\\_11.pdf](http://www.wdr.de/unternehmen/service/infomaterial/pdf/wbb_saisonbro_2010_11.pdf) (accessed March 29, 2011).

of the band has been handed to notable composers, not established bandleaders. This move towards composers could be related to an increased need for suitable arrangements for a varied stable of incoming guest artists with the band, as well as for compositions that could be world premiered. The band chose American composers – Dobbins and Abene – with great reputations for cutting edge style in their compositions and very modern big band ideas in musical concept and ensemble structure. Further, it was no longer necessary for the station to hire a bandleader with the hopes that their entire band would come with them. The WDR Big Band since 1994 was at the threshold of international renown; members were not particularly inclined to leave.

Despite the desire for American directors over the last seventeen years, the personnel of the WDR Big Band consist predominantly of Europeans, mostly Germans. The nationalist approach to stocking the bands sections is reminiscent of the past and allows the band to maintain its uniquely German identity. Today, German jazz musicians now are on par with their American counterparts. They are capable of playing with the same technical virtuosity and harmonic complexity, which often transcend contemporary performances in New York and elsewhere.

The WDR Big Band no longer is constrained by economic concerns. This has been perhaps the most defining element of the band's artistic success through the years. Because of the aforementioned broadcast station support, enforced by governmental mandates, the WDR band can make decisions based solely on their artistic merits. Nicholson mentions that,

For the majority of post-swing era bands survival often meant that economic viability took precedence over artistic ambition. Thus,

developments in modifying what had become the commonly accepted status quo in both orchestrational and instrumental terms were conservative, measured only in a series of caveats, codicils and only on occasion a total re-drafting of the basic formula worked out by Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington and Count Basie, the prime architects for big band jazz.<sup>124</sup>

The WDR band never did have these concerns. Finance was, and is, not tethered to their popular success. Of course, there is popular pressure from broadcasting music boards, audiences, and the band members, but the band's viability and sustainability are not directly tied to audience enthusiasm. As the law states, the pressure is to play a range of culturally important music that enhances the unique sound of German jazz. Despite all this, the WDR jazz listener base continues to be supportive and is in fact growing thanks to internet broadcasts of concerts and CD sales globally. Sold out concerts continue to be the norm. Their audience members tend to be educated in jazz idioms, engaged listeners, clapping appropriately at the end of even complex solo forms. Even very "out" or "free" jazz inspires a certain jazz elitism mentality amongst the general audience and still tends to find broad based acceptance.

In most of the first recordings of the WDR Big Band there was very little indication of doubling in the woodwind and trumpet sections. Doubling was coming into vogue at this time in the United States, with the saxes expected to easily double on

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<sup>124</sup> Nicholson, 37; He proceeds to point out that "...if public expectation helped shape the sound of the big bands, so did the educational system from which most of the musicians playing in their ranks during the '80s emerged. Performing in large ensembles demands sound instrumental technique, inch-perfect phrasing, precise intonation, dynamic control and the ability to read at first sight often complex scores. Bringing these elements together is an important process in learning to make music."

clarinet and flute, and the trumpets expected to be fluent on the flugelhorn.<sup>125</sup> Even earlier bands such as Ellington's, Stan Kenton's, and Miles Davis's used many doubles. Despite this trend in the United States, the WDR Big Band, though certainly pushing boundaries in many ways, did not seem to feel the need at the onset of their recording career to employ doubling in the wind sections. This could be interpreted as playing it safe, or it could simply be that the band's personnel was not ready to be showcased as doublers, as this was not part of the earlier dance orchestra environment. This would be addressed over time, with personnel changes and practicing on the part of the band members. Despite the few isolated instances of woodwind doubling early on, it is safe to say that the Germans did not find this sound to be necessary for the modern big band sound. It could also suggest that the arrangements or compositions used by the early big bands did not use doubles because they were lagging behind the norms of the 1980's.

Unlike in the United States, the WDR Big Band, and other popular broadcast station bands across Germany, gained popularity with renowned independent artists. In other words, players who would be able to have solo careers independent of the band *wanted* to be a part of the band. This was, in large part, due to the band's popularity and to respect from musicians in Germany and Europe, as well as the job security that was related to these positions. It was a stable gig. This was not always true for German jazz musicians working independently, especially with the steep decline of jazz during the 1980's. The band offered the players a steady income, a consistent platform for artistic

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<sup>125</sup> Bands such as Thad Jones-Mel Lewis, Toshiko, or Bob Brookmeyer were well known for their implementation of complex doubling parts requiring intense virtuosity on multiple instruments.

expression, an interested audience, free publicity, a great track record since Edelhagen's rendition of a big band, and an environment saturated with great players. Few other options with this type of stability existed to which German jazz musicians could aspire. In keeping with the German mindset, many artists would be willing to sacrifice an element of individual fame to enhance their job security and be able to offer benefits to their families. This is a holdover from the World War II mentality. People wanted the sense of security that a stable position, like one in the WDR Big Band, would offer. Furthermore, the job with this big band required minimum touring and travel time, ideal for musicians who wanted to enjoy a family life in Cologne. Lastly, musicians were able to stay in the band for as long as they wanted to play in it, and most often have done so to the present day. Since the band was a stable part of the orchestra division at the WDR, no band member had to fear that the ensemble would dissolve in the future.

By the 1990's, and into the present, the band was headed towards incorporating all the features of modern big bands from the United States, including doublings. It is highly likely that this trend is a direct result of the influence of both Dobbins and Abene, both of whom would have been used to writing for ensembles with any number of doubling capabilities and would bring these expectations to their writing posts with the WDR Big Band.<sup>126</sup> As the WDR Big Band continued to move into even more eclectic musical avenues, such as incorporating Indian musical sensibilities on "Bombella," the

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<sup>126</sup> In fact, most modern big bands have ventured into rather unusual instruments used for doubling. While saxophonists in the past were required to be competent on Bb clarinet and flute, today's jazz saxophonist should be able to double on alto or bass flute, bass clarinet, oboe, piccolo. This way of using the entire span of woodwind timbres was first introduced by Miles Davis, but had not become a jazz saxophonist requirement until the 1990's.



players would be presented with new and unique challenges over time, forcing them to adapt and continuously develop as musicians.<sup>127</sup> In addition to including world music into the sonic landscape of the ensemble, there has also been a distinctive trend towards a certain European eclecticism that can only be defined as incorporating as many musical influences as possible. Thus, one can see influences from funk, German popular music, American pop styles, fusion, free jazz, acid jazz, vocal jazz, and other styles present in their music. Similarly, guest artists from varied genres, such as fusion saxophonist Michael Brecker, funk-jazz drummer Dave Weckl, or vocal jazz group *Take 6*, have all appeared as headliners with the group, live as well as on recordings.<sup>128</sup> Each of these artists would represent distinctly different genres within the jazz idiom.

In addition to this distinctive eclecticism, the WDR has brought varied historical perspectives to their programming schedule. For instance, in a two-year time span starting in 2007, the WDR Big Band recorded with Maceo Parker on *Roots & Grooves*, with Karim Ziad *Jazz Al Arab*, and recorded two compact discs entitled *The World Of Duke Ellington*.<sup>129</sup> This diversity is but one example of all their concert seasons. It demonstrates a continued effort to bring both historical “roots” of jazz and more modern styles together into a comprehensive whole. One of the main missions of WDR Big Band programming director Lucas Schmid is to preserve the roots of the ensemble while

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<sup>127</sup> WDR Big Band Köln, *Bombella*, Abdullah Ibrahim & WDR Big Band Cologne conducted by Steve Gray. (WDR: Intuition INT 3430 2), 2008, Compact Disc.

<sup>128</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>129</sup> See Appendix for a full citation of the compact discs.

continuing to stay on the front line of the modern big band sound.<sup>130</sup> The WDR Big Band is appreciated by other groups around the world, such as the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra, the Bob Brookmeyer Jazz Orchestra, the Village Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and the Dave Holland Big Band. In the United States as well, those who keep current with big band jazz know and respect the WDR Big Band.

Along with its wide recognition in the jazz community as an innovative and important voice, the WDR Big Band has continued to receive critical acclaim, both from reviewers and through Grammy awards. Vince Mendoza's writing for the WDR Big Band CD *The Vince Mendoza / Arif Mardin Project: Jazzpaña* was given a Grammy nomination for "best instrumental arrangement."<sup>131</sup> The album, *Some Skunk Funk*, received multiple Grammy awards for the WDR Big Band and the Brecker brothers, Randy and Michael. The collaboration with jazz singer Patti Austin yielded another Grammy win, as did a second collaboration with Vince Mendoza, *In a Silent Way*, featuring compositions of Joe Zawinul. With this high degree of international acclaim, it has become impossible for the jazz community to ignore the WDR Big Band as a serious force in the contemporary big band genre. Furthermore, it is now in the best interests of the broadcast station to allow a great deal of programming freedom to the artistic directors and programming chairs. Projects are now developed by these individuals, not assigned by the managers. Interestingly, unlike other groups who might have their eyes

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<sup>130</sup> WDR, "Saison Broschüre der Big Band, Vorwort Lucas Schmid," Westdeutscher Rundfunk, [http://www.wdr.de/unternehmen/service/infomaterial/pdf/wbb\\_saisonbro\\_2010\\_11.pdf](http://www.wdr.de/unternehmen/service/infomaterial/pdf/wbb_saisonbro_2010_11.pdf) (accessed March 29, 2011).

<sup>131</sup> Vince Mendoza, "Biography," <http://www.vincemendoza.net/vince.html> (accessed March 29, 2011).

set on a Grammy nod for financial reasons or to further their musical career, the WDR Big Band has no incentives of that nature. The performers and the director receive the same compensation regardless of critical acclaim or success. Thus, it is the music that serves as the inspirational force of the ensemble.

In Germany, the WDR Big Band continues to be involved in jazz education and the movement to keep jazz alive. They continue to perform at a wide range of festivals, including those sponsored by towns, interscholastic music festivals, and international jazz festivals. While this may seem like a large amount of touring, it pales in comparison to the engagements of the band within their broadcasting boundaries, the state of Northrhine-Westphalia. With events in their home state nearly every week, the band stays busy, mostly on a regional level.<sup>132</sup> The balance of outstanding performance and its educational role parallels those of both professional American bands and the United States military jazz ensembles, most of whom have a very active performing schedule at high schools, colleges, and universities, all in the service of preserving historical jazz. In many ways, the WDR Big Band is quite similar to the American military jazz ensembles. They are both well funded, they enjoy job security and singularity of purpose, and they record. The greatest difference is that the WDR Big Band maintains the ability to make all of its own programming choices, while American military bands are frequently expected to perform for government and ceremonial functions.

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<sup>132</sup> The 2010-2011 season overview provides an excellent guide for the many engagements in which the group participate. WDR, “WDR Big Band Saison Broschüre Saison 2010-2011,” [http://www.wdr.de/unternehmen/service/infomaterial/pdf/wbb\\_saisonbro\\_2010\\_11.pdf](http://www.wdr.de/unternehmen/service/infomaterial/pdf/wbb_saisonbro_2010_11.pdf) (accessed March 30, 2011).

Musicians in the United States find several characteristics of the WDR Big Band appealing. Americans admire the band because of the clean ensemble sound, the groundbreaking collaborations with international jazz musicians and world music artists, and the innovative projects that the group has chosen to take on. This appreciation from the United States instills a great sense of pride in German jazz musicians. The WDR Big Band performances are a regular feature on German public and private television, enhancing the reach and reputation of the group. YouTube's view count confirms the band's international reputation. In the United States, Maria Schneider's Jazz Orchestra is credited as the leading innovative jazz orchestra in America. Schneider's top view count video has only 70% the number of views as the top WDR Big Band video, a video of the WDR band with the world renowned Yellowjackets.<sup>133</sup> In fact, the top three WDR Big Band videos all surpassed Schneider's band's in user view count. This may well be because of its significant collaborations with world artists as a part of its trademark. While the WDR Big Band has a much more detailed history than could be presented in this study, there is also much future research needed to obtain a clearer picture of its development. Many facets of the band's history and evolution could not be fully traced because they have not been published yet. Research must be conducted in the archives of the Broadcasting station to fully understand the details of the organization. Issues like the challenges of the transformation from a dance orchestra to a big band, personnel choices

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<sup>133</sup> Maria Schneider's top YouTube video view count was 94,424, playing her composition "Boleria, Solea y Rumba," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCFxPO1iwc0> (accessed March 30, 2011); the WDR Big Band's top YouTube video view count was 139,984, playing "Azure Moon," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHPW9DQxawM> (accessed March 30, 2011).

that were made, specific salary data, earlier touring schedules, early recordings of the dance orchestra, are a few of the important questions that can only be answered by work in the archives of the WDR Big Band and its parent radio station.

As the WDR Big Band develops in the future, one can assume that the past trends of blending innovation and cutting-edge collaborations with projects focused on historical retrospection will continue. The band is *very* well funded and, barring any changes in the German *Grundgesetz* and the *Landesgericht* law that supported funding for the WDR, will remain so for the foreseeable future. WDR Big Band members, unlike members of most other performing and recording groups at their level, have the unique opportunity to rehearse music. This allows for a level of ensemble musicianship not generally achieved in other professional ensembles. In addition, this rehearsal environment removes a degree of stress from band members, making the workplace less competitive and more collaborative. Finally, given that this is one of the few ensembles in the world in which a jazz performer can have a full-time position, the members are apt to stay with the WDR Big Band for extended employment.

To the present day, the law (*Grundgesetz*) still states that it is the public radio station's specific role to provide a "basic service to the cultural life in Germany, therefore to serve on a direct cultural political mission."<sup>134</sup> More specifically, the federal constitution court of Germany (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) issued a finding that specifically outlines the definition of basic service to German citizens. The court states that cultural knowledge for its citizens shall be just as important as other essential

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<sup>134</sup> Frisius, 611-634.

services such as food and shelter provided by the government.<sup>135</sup> It is because of this public law that the musical landscape in the public radio station sector is both rich and multi-faceted.

The WDR Big Band has, to the present day, gained a reputation as an innovative voice in the big band world. They function as an active educational arm in schools, universities, and within the state of Northrhine-Westphalia. The WDR Big Band is now both well known in Germany and around the world, and highly respected. The band has completely transformed from being a purely entertainment group, as in the 1940's-1970's to an artistic ensemble that has enjoyed a great deal of artistic freedom from the 1980's onward. As long as music is protected by law in Germany, and as long as radio broadcasting programs are required to include a wide spectrum of music, jazz and the WDR Big Band will thrive and continue to be one of the few remaining jazz gems in Germany.

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<sup>135</sup> Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, "ABC der ARD," [http://www.ard.de/intern/abc/-/id=1643802/nid=1643802/did=1658312/hob0ig/index.html#abcListItem\\_1658312](http://www.ard.de/intern/abc/-/id=1643802/nid=1643802/did=1658312/hob0ig/index.html#abcListItem_1658312) (last accessed March 26, 2011).

## APPENDIX

WDR Big Band Discography and Videography  
 - in chronological order, beginning with the latest release

WDR Big Band Köln. *Maceo Parker & WDR Big Band - A Tribute to Ray Charles*. WDR Big Band Köln with Maceo Parker conducted by Michael Abene. WDR: Intuition INT 3413 2, 2010. DVD.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Hilde*. WDR Big Band Köln with Heike Makatsch conducted by Dietmar Mensinger. Hamburg: Warner Music Group Germany GmbH 5051865-3285-2-0, 2009. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Bill Evans Vans Joint*. WDR Big Band Köln with Bill Evans conducted by Michael Abene. WDR: The Cologne Broadcasts BHM 1038 2, 2008. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Bombella*. Abdullah Ibrahim & WDR Big Band Cologne. WDR Big Band Köln with Abdullah Ibrahim conducted by Steve Gray. WDR: Intuition INT 3430 2, 2008. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Hiram Bullock Plays the Music of Jimi Hendrix*. Billy Cobham and WDR Big Band Köln conducted by Bern Lechtenfeld. WDR: The Cologne Broadcasts BHM 1034-2, 2004, re-released in 2008. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Miso Afro Cubano*. Michael Phillipp Mossmann and the WDR Big Band Cologne. Cologne: Connector Records/WDR 0821895984325, 2008. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Roots & Grooves*. Maceo Parker with Dennis Chambers, Rodney "Skeet" Curtis and the WDR Big Band Cologne conducted by Michael Abene. WDR: Intuition INT 3413 2, 2008. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Symphonica*. Joe Lovano and the WDR Big Band conducted by Michael Abene. Blue Note/WDR: The Cologne Broadcasts 50999 5 26225 2 5, 2008. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Celebrating Billie Holiday*. WDR Big Band featuring Cécile Verny conducted by Michael Abene. Cologne:

CMO Jazz/WDR CMO 600066, 2007, re-released on CMO Jazz in 2008. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Avant Gershwin*. WDR Big Band feat. Patti Austin conducted by Michael Abene. California: Rendezvous REN 51232, 2006/2007.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Blues & Beyond*. WDR Big Band with Joe Williams and Milt Jackson conducted by John Clayton. Cologne: BHM Productions BHM 1027-2, 1991, re-released 2007. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Brown Street*. WDR Big Band with Joe Zawinul conducted by Vince Mendoza. Cleveland, OH: Head Up International HUCD 3121, 2005, re-released 2007. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Improvise One*. WDR Big Band & WDR Rundfunkorchester Köln featuring Paquito d’Rivera and Fay Claassen conducted by Michael Abene. Remseck: Termidor-Musikverlag 59847-2, 2007. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Improvise One*. WDR Big Band & WDR Rundfunkorchester Köln featuring Paquito d’Rivera and Fay Claassen conducted by Michael Abene. WDR Köln: Connector Records 59846-2, 2007. DVD.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Some Skunk Funk*. WDR Big Band feat. Randy Brecker and Michael Brecker conducted by Vince Mendoza. Cleveland, OH: Telarc Jazz 63647, 2003, re-released 2006. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Joyce Celebrating Jobim*. WDR Big Band Köln with Joyce conducted by Gilson Peranzetta. Japan: Omagatoki 487393, 2007. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Some Skunk Funk*. WDR Big Band feat. Randy Brecker, Michael Brecker, and Peter Erskine conducted by Vince Mendoza. Germany: BHM Productions BHM 1020, 2003, re-released 2007. DVD.

WDR Big Band Köln. *World of Duke Ellington, Vol.3*. WDR Big Band featuring Phil Woods and John Riley conducted by Bill Dobbins. Cologne: WDR BHM 1024-2, 1994, re-released in 2007. Compact Disc.



- WDR Big Band Köln. *World of Duke Ellington, Vol.2*. WDR Big Band featuring Dianne Reeves, Ray Brown, Jeff Hamilton and Benny Green conducted by John Clayton. Cologne: WDR BHM 1023-2, 1994, re-released in 2007. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln. *The World of Duke Ellington, Vol.1*. WDR Big Band featuring Freda Payne, Milt Grayson, Jimmy Woode, and Grady Tate conducted by Jerry van Rooyen. Cologne: WDR BHM 1022-2, 1994, re-released 2007. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln. *Ich bin sehr jung auf eine sehr alte Welt gekommen: Eine Liaison von Musik & Literatur*. Christian Brückner, Frank Chastenier, Bill Dobbins, Peter Erskine and the WDR Big Band. Saarbrücken: Caracalla Media HOER 9100, 2006. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln. *Jazz Al'Arab*. WDR Big Band Köln featuring Karim Ziad, Aziz Sahmaoui, Mehdi Askeur, and Rhani Krija conducted by Michael Gibbs. Cologne: NRW/WDR records 8001, 2006. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln, et al. *Very Personal Vol. 01*. Germany: NRW Jazz, 2006. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln. *Djangology*. WDR Big Band with Biréli Lagrène conducted by Michael Abene. France: Dreyfus Jazz FDM 46050366962, 2005/2006. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln. *Winterwunderwelt*. WDR Big Band Köln with Götz Alsmann and the Cologne Voices conducted by Ansgar Striepens. WDR: ROOF Music RD 2633282, 2005/2006. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln. *Niedecken Köln*. WDR Big Band Köln with Wolfgang Niedecken conducted by Mike Herting. Köln: Capitol Records 724387439207, 2004. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln. *Tango y Postango: Gerardo Gandini*. Conducted by Gerardo Gandini. Cologne: WDR/NRW Jazz NRW 9012, 2004. Compact Disc.
- WDR Big Band Köln et al. *Voices of Concord Jazz Live at Montreux*. Beverly Hills, CA: Concord Records CCD2-2246-2, 2004. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Paquito D’Rivera: Big Band Time*. WDR Big Band with Paquito D’Rivera conducted by Bill Dobbins. Miami, FL: Pimienta Records 24536059-2, 2003. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Colours of Siam*. WDR Big Band with Hayden Chisholm conducted by Thorsten Wollmann. Freiburg, Germany: IN+OUT Records IOR CD 77053-2, 2002. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Dedalo*. WDR Big Band with Markus Stockhausen, Fulvio Maras, and Tom Rainey conducted by Gianluigi Trovesi. Munich: Enja ENJ-94192, 2002. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *For Ella*. Patti Austin with Patrick Williams and the WDR Big Band. Concord, CA: Concord Records PBD-7503-2, 2002. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Sketches of Bangalore*. WDR Big Band Köln with Charlie Mariano and the Karnataka College of Percussion conducted by Mike Herting. [Cologne]: WDR PMP CD 103, 2002. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln and WDR Radio Orchestra Köln. *Intersections: Jazz Meets the Symphony #5*. Featuring David Sanchez, James Morrison, Christian McBride, and Jeff Hamilton conducted by Lalo Schiffrin. [United States]: Aleph Records 023, 2001. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *American Songs*. WDR Big Band Köln with Caterina Valente conducted by Jerry van Rooyen. Hambergen, Germany: Bear Family BCD 16044 AH, 1990, re-released 2000. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Bullitt*. WDR Big Band Köln conducted by Lalo Schiffrin. [United States]: Aleph Records 018, 2000. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Esperanto*. WDR Big Band Köln conducted by Lalo Schiffrin. [Germany]: Aleph Records 019, 2000. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Jazz Goes to Hollywood*. WDR Big Band Köln with Ernie Watts, Nils Landgren, Sandra Booker, and Wolfgang Haffner conducted by Lalo Schiffrin. [Germany]: Aleph Records 016, 2000. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Mannix Soundtrack*. WDR Big Band Köln conducted by Lalo Schiffrin. [Germany]: Aleph Records 014, recorded 1999, released 2000. Compact Disc.

WDR Big Band Köln. *Get Hit in Your Soul*. WDR Big Band Köln with Jack Walrath and Miles Griffith conducted by Bill Dobbins. [Germany]: ACT Music ACT 9246-2, 1996, re-recorded 1999. Compact Disc.

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